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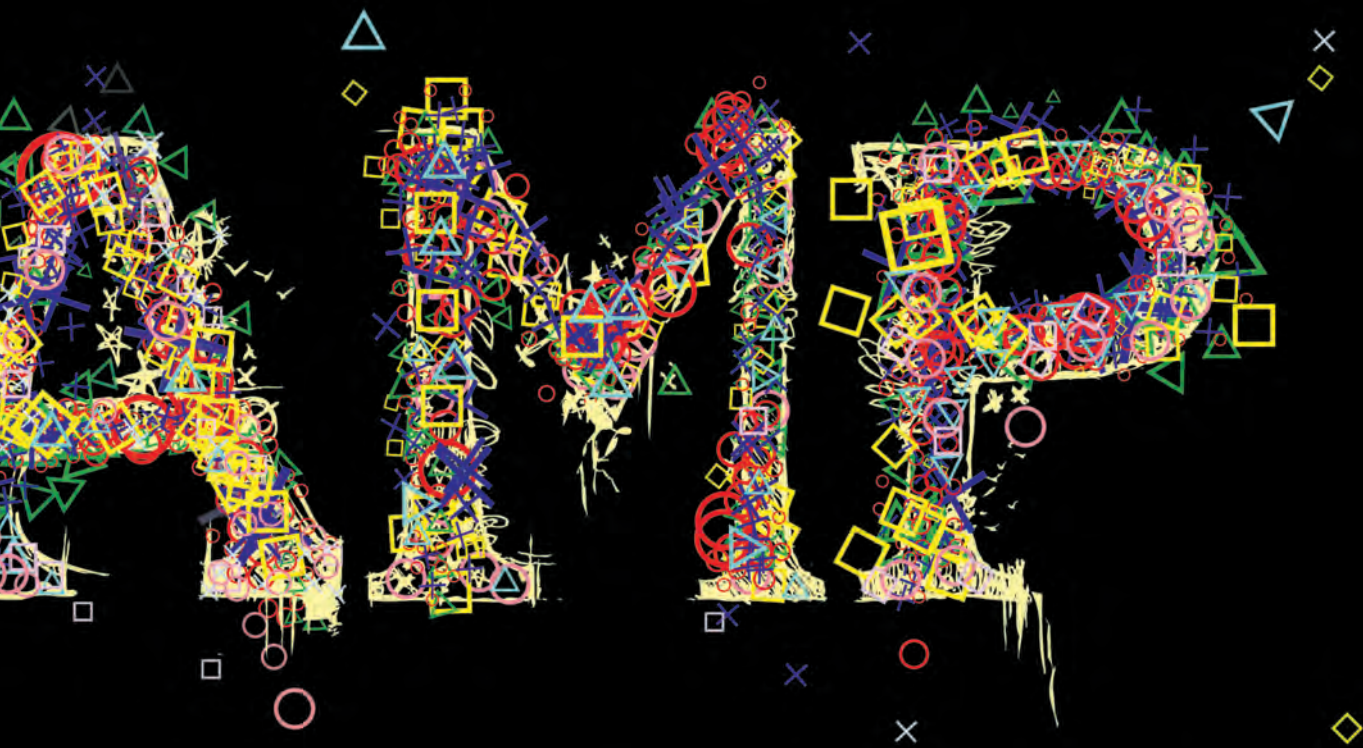
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## REGULARS

- 12 Ed's Note
- 14 Inbox
- 16 Bytes
- 84 Mobile
- 90 Looking Back: Quest for Glory
- 118 Lifestyle - Movies
- 124 Lifestyle - Comics
- 126 Lifestyle - Figurines
- 128 Lifestyle - Board Game
- 130 Game Over

## COLUMNS

- 26 Opinion - Miktar's Meanderings
- 28 Opinion - Dammit
- 30 Opinion - Ramjet
- 100 Hardware - Hardwired
- 102 Hardware - Reviewer's Diary

## FEATURES

- 32 Games Remade

## HARDWARE

- 94 Hardware Intro
- 96 Interview
- 98 Dream Machine
- 104 Extreme Overclocking: Intel Core 2 Duo E8600
- 106 Audio at its Best: Creative X-Fi Titanium Fatal1ty + Sennheiser PC 350
- 108 Sapphire HD 4870 X2
- 110 Sitecom WL-308 Wireless 300N XR Gigabit Gaming Router
- 112 ASUS Extreme Rampage
- 114 Sapphire HD 4850 TOXIC Edition CrossFire
- 115 MSI P45 Platinum
- 116 OCZ Equalizer Laser Gaming Mouse
- 116 PSP UMD Replacement Cases



## PREVIEWS

- 36 Previews Intro
- 38 Halo Wars
- 40 Need for Speed: Undercover
- 42 Dead Space
- 44 Dragon Age: Origins
- 46 Aion: The Tower of Eternity
- 48 Brothers in Arms: Hell's Highway
- 50 S.T.A.L.K.E.R.: Clear Sky
- 52 Pure
- 54 Fuel
- 56 Borderlands
- 58 Stormrise
- 59 Demigod

## REVIEWS

- 60 Reviews Intro
- 62 Star Wars: The Force Unleashed [360]
- 70 Warhammer 40,000: Dawn of War - The Complete Collection [PC]
- 72 Tiger Woods PGA Tour 09 [360]
- 74 Space Siege [PC]
- 76 MX vs. ATV Untamed [360]
- 78 Hellboy: Science of Evil [360]
- 80 Beijing 2008 [360]
- 81 Braid [360]
- 82 Bionic Commando: Rearmed [360]
- 82 The Incredible Hulk [360]
- 83 Ferrari Challenge: Trofeo Pirelli [PS3]
- 83 Overlord: Raising Hell [PS3]

## ON THE DVD



### DEMOS

Death Track Resurrection

### DRIVERS

NVIDIA GeForce Power Pack

### FREE GAMES

Red Alert, Quest for Glory II VGA remake

### PATCHES

Guitar Hero III: Legends of Rock (v1.31) | Spore Creature Creator - Complete Version (v1.01) | Spore Creature Creator - Trial Version (v1.01) | Unreal Tournament III (Patch 3)

### UTILITIES

MagicISO Virtual CD DVD-ROM (v2.7.105) | WinRAR (v3.7.1)

### VIDEOS

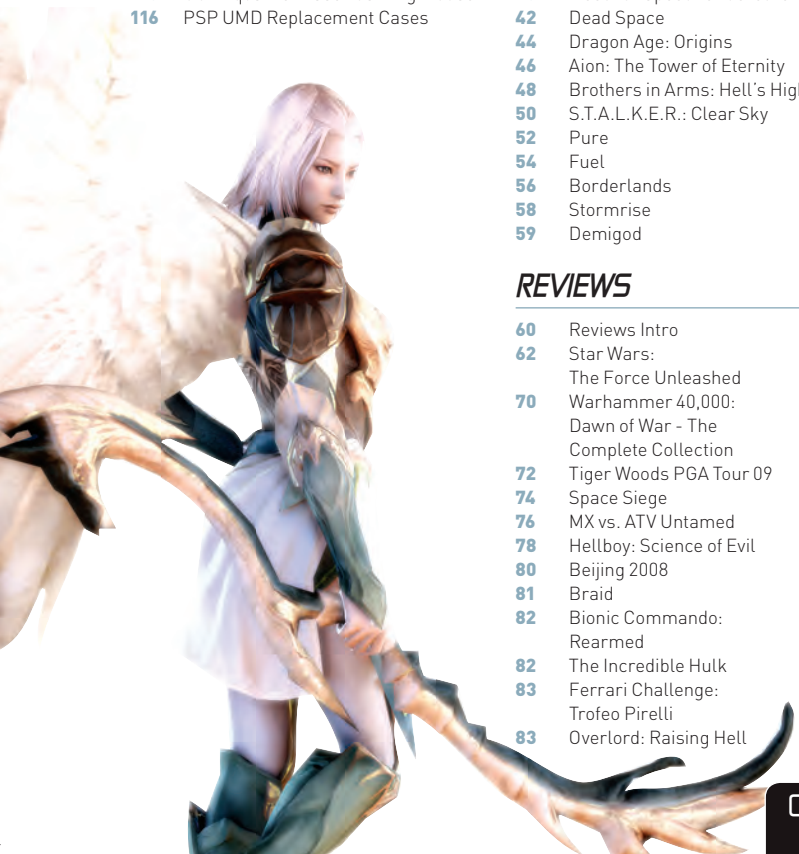
-Game videos and trailers-  
 Afrika | American McGee's Grimm | Bionic Commando Evolution Trailer | Bionic Commando Rearmed - Co-Op | Bionic Commando Rearmed - Gameplay Montage | Bionic Commando Rearmed - Solo | Bionic Commando Rearmed | Braid | Combat Arms - Gameplay | Crysis Warhead | Damnation - Debut Trailer | Dead Space Comic | Dragon Age Origins - Wilds - Darkspawn Fight | Exteel | Facebreaker - Celebrity Faces | Facebreaker Gameplay | Fuel - Debut Trailer | Galaga Legions | Godfather 2 | Igor - Movie Trailer | Kore - Debut Trailer | LittleBigPlanet - Sackboy | Macross | Master of the Monster Lair | MegaMan 9 - Gameplay | MegaMan 9 - Opening Cinematic | Mercenaries 2 Launch Trailer | Monster Racers | Mortal Kombat vs. DC Universe - Teaser | Multiwinia - Capture the Statue | Mutawinia - Domination | MySims - PC Debut Trailer | N+ | Naruto Clash of Ninja Revolution | NBA 2009 | Quantum of Solace Reveal Trailer | Ratchet & Clank Quest for Booty - Gameplay | Ratchet & Clank Quest for Booty - Intro | Red Baron - XBLA | Rise of the Argonauts | Romance of the Three Kingdoms XI | Runes of Magic | Samba de Amigo | SimCity Creator | Skate 2 First Look | Skate It | Sonic Chronicles The Dark Brotherhood | Spore - Civilisation Stage | Spore - Galactic Edition | Star Trek Online Trailer | Star Wars: The Force Unleashed | Team Fortress 2 - Meet Sandwich | Tiger Woods PGA Tour 09 | TNA Impact | Tomb Raider Underworld - Tiger | Tomb Raider Underworld | Tormishire | TrackMania DS | Urban Race - Debut Trailer | Vampire Rain Altered Species | Warhammer Online: Age of Reckoning - GC08 Cinematic Trailer | Wrath of the Lich King - Intro

### DEAD SPACE COMICS

Dead Space Comic Issue 1 | Dead Space Comic Issue 2 | Dead Space Comic Issue 3 | Dead Space Comic Issue 4 | Dead Space Comic Issue 5

### SCEWATTACK VIDEOGAMEV AULT

Screwattack VGV SectionZ | Screwattack VGV Tecmo Wrestling | Screwattack VGV Uniracers | Screwattack VGV 18 Wheeler | Screwattack VGV 1990 Nintendo World Championship | Screwattack VGV Altered Beast | Screwattack VGV Boxing Fever | Screwattack VGV Lode Runner | Screwattack VGV MegaMan 5 | Screwattack VGV Mr Nutz | Screwattack VGV Rocko | Screwattack VGV Shadow of the Ninja | Screwattack VGV SuperBusterBros | Screwattack VGV Tetris | Screwattack VGV Worms | Screwattack VGV Wrath of the Black Manta





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Games for Windows





# WELL, HELLO THERE...

**WE HAVE A LOT** of ground to cover here people, so grab a caffeine-laced beverage, shake the cobwebs away and pay careful attention to every word I say. But before all that, I'm going to talk about this...

So, they want to ban videogames and music in South Africa because it creates/promotes violent behaviour in children (Read Ramjet's column for some context)? I think I should mention that these righteous groups are making an error. First up, shifting the blame onto something you can possibly get rid of legally will not make the problem go away. Heading off to the castle at the top of the hill and burning it down won't solve the real problem: the parents, the environment and the upbringing. If these groups really want to help, then rather appeal to the government to force people to take strict exams before having children, so that they can actually take care of their offspring properly. It's amazing to me that absolutely anyone can have a child these days - from twelve-year-old girls to grandmothers, drug addicts to alcoholics, abusive personalities to families who clearly cannot afford children. This goes on everyday without any form of control or restrictions. The planet cannot support all these people; the world is dying because there are too many people; too many people having more and more children. The gaming industry is growing fast, and these righteous groups are abusing the current popularity of gaming to try to get publicity to further their own agendas. So, instead of spending time and energy on banning entertainment that clearly has nothing to do with why these select few (out of the millions of others) decide to commit crimes, why not examine the real social symptoms behind the problem instead of attacking something you clearly don't understand. Then onto the unhinged gamers, please do us all a favour... If you're a gamer reading this and are planning on killing the school bully, at least have the decency to leave a detailed note somewhere explaining exactly why you've decided to be that stupid instead of leaving behind a cupboard full of evil games and screwing it up for everyone else. Remember, if you're having a serious problem talk to a professional. Here's the toll-free number for Childline: 08000 55555. I called them today and they told me they will help anyone with any problem no matter the age, race or situation - they couldn't help me though.

## WE RULE!

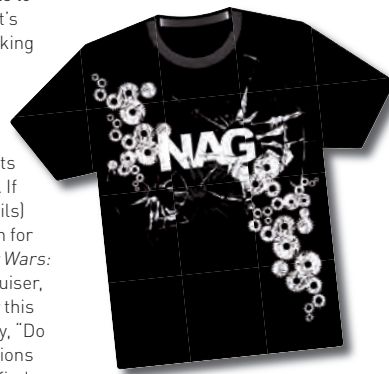
In case anyone ever asks (my way of making a brag looks less like a brag), the July issue of *NAG* (the *Far Cry 2* cover) broke a record here at *NAG*: it was the best-selling magazine we've ever published. So here's a big thanks to everyone who picked up a copy! You see, *NAG* grows slowly each month as we convert more and more to the way of gaming, but occasionally an issue breaks all the barriers and jumps up a lot higher than expected (we're never really sure why sometimes). This continued growth is good for you because we then have the muscle to get all the best exclusives, advertising, competitions, and opportunities and so on. Yes, it's good to be at the top - for everyone. In the next few months up until April 2009, we're making a lot of changes and improvements to everything, so keep an eye out and prepare to be impressed.

## THE REST...

To wrap up, here's a whole pile of things in no particular order. We now have *NAG* T-Shirts - order them from BT Games ([www.btgames.co.za](http://www.btgames.co.za)). More retailers will have them soon. If you're a *Gears of War 2* fan, you can win a very limited-edition Xbox (see page 17 for details) - this prize is really something special. On page 92, we're running a massive competition for *Star Wars* loot. The main winner will get an Xbox 360 Pro 60GB, a copy of the game, *Star Wars: Force Unleashed*, a Darth Vader figurine, a LEGO Star Wars Limited Edition Republic Cruiser, and a *Star Wars* trade paperback (thanks to our amazing sponsors). If you'd like to enter this awesome competition, then SMS **Vader** to **36560** - and like those lame adverts on TV say, "Do it now!" Quick, go see. Then, *NAG* and *SACM* can be purchased online as digital publications without a CD or DVD. This is to cater to those people who have too much bandwidth and find the extra cost associated with the CD or DVD too much to justify buying the magazine each month. Go to [www.mymag.co.za](http://www.mymag.co.za) for a closer look. With this issue of *NAG*, we've also included a 32-page supplement on the Games Convention recently held in Germany. *NAG* was there, read all about it. There's no cover story this issue. I mean Darth Vader should always be a clear choice. We also managed to get an early copy of *Star Wars: The Force Unleashed* for review in this issue (six pages and one exhausted reviewer later). Reminder: *rAge* kicks off on 3 October - be there!

Later people and see you at *rAge*!

Michael James  
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## LETTER OF THE MOMENT

FROM: Miklos

SUBJECT: Blessed are the Fanboys

**"BLESSED ARE THE FANBOYS...** for they shall inherit the forums – once everyone else has grown bored of their incessant ranting and gone off to play some games. The word "fanboy" was, a few months ago, officially added to the English language. Merriam-Webster hauled the word out of the dust and deluge of forum flame wars, cleaned it up, reminded it that it had actually been around since 1919 (wait, what?) and then thrust it out onto the stage of the English Language for all the world to gawk at. While gawking I got thinking, not about the word but about those the word represents. One of the best parts of the current generation console wars for me has been the overtly fanatical preaching of the fanboys across forums, magazine letters and those little comment blocks at the end of website articles. Perhaps it is the fact that gaming has rocketed in popularity, or that the competition between Sony, Nintendo and Microsoft has been unwaveringly publicised, but there seems to be a more enraged and militant breed of fanboy out there these days. For years fanboys were locked in a PC versus Console war, each side vehemently defending their platform of choice's supremacy as a gaming machine. This time around, however, a civil war has erupted amongst the console fanboys, as console brethren (once united against PC gamers) have turned on each other. This is all just too similar to something else for me to pass up the opportunity for an analogy: throughout history mankind has been slaughtering one another because of one group's conviction that their religion is superior to that of another's. Does this blind fanaticism sound familiar? This time, crusaders fanboys defend their religion consoles, be it the Xbox 360, Wii or PlayStation 3. All it takes is to have done a little bit of theology to see that this analogy can be extended even further: Christianity, Islam

and Judaism (or the monotheistic religions) all worship the same God, but they just go about it differently. The same could apply for the consoles; all three consoles exist for the same reason: gaming. And this is where being a latitudinarian (look it up!) with some disposable income helps. Personally I love the fanboys because they remind me of how superior and seemingly rich I am. Invariably the most avid fanboys of any of the three consoles are the ones that are either too poor to afford to buy them all, or are the ones too young and dependant on their parents to buy one for them. Therefore, these disproportionately self-opinionated and enraged individuals have no alternative other than to defend their choice of console to the death regardless of whether it was the right one to choose. Personally, I've found the best cure for "fanboyism" is to own all of the platforms, PC included. In doing so you reach some sort of gaming nirvana or transcendental state whereby you simply get to play whatever game comes out no matter what the platform. In this state you rise above the blinkered, fanboy existence and become one with gaming in its entirety, no longer fearful of those "console exclusive" titles and safe in the certainty that you can play everything that gets released, and laugh at those who can't."

*You know what? I really like you. Perhaps you should write a column in NAG each month. If you'd like to, send me a column or two and I'll see if I can fit you in. The only catch is that once you start, you have to write one every month... For your clear thinking and, what can only be described as a professional snubbing of the console wars and all the fanboys in one fell swoop, have yourself a free game. I'll tell Jacqui, when she calls you not to bother to ask you which platform you prefer. :) What a LOL. I was serious about the column BTW – just putting it out there. Ed.*

<sup>1</sup> "Latitudinarian was initially a pejorative term applied to a group of seventeenth-century English theologians who believed in conforming to official Church of England practices but who felt that matters of doctrine, liturgical practice, and ecclesiastical organisation were of relatively little importance. In this, they built on Richard Hooker's position, in *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, that God cares about the moral state of the individual soul and that such things as church leadership are 'things indifferent'. However, they took the position far beyond Hooker's own and extended it to doctrinal matters. As a positive position, their stance was that human reason is a sufficient guide when combined with the Holy Spirit for the determination of truth in doctrinal contests, and therefore that legal and doctrinal rulings that constrain reason and the freedom of the believer were neither necessary nor salutary. At the time, their position was referred to as Low Church (in contrast to the High Church position). Later, the latitudinarian position was called Broad church." [www.wikipedia.com](http://www.wikipedia.com).

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FROM: Christo

SUBJECT: The Inbox

**"NAG'S LETTERS PAGE IS** usually the last section I turn to every month, after having read most of the rest of the magazine. Sadly, this exercise more often than not leaves me with the sense that I had just been witness to an under-14's

gaming discussion group. If we are to believe those who provide us with statistics from the world of gaming, then most gamers are supposed to be older than 20 or even 30 [18-34 apparently, Ed]. Yet it seems these post-pubescent gamers are either too lazy or uninterested to write to your publication, or maybe you prefer to print

letters from your adolescent readership since they are, understandably, more fun to reply to? But, unfortunately, reading those replies aren't always as entertaining as I'm sure they are fun to come up with. I'm not saying that we should start discussing mesotrons, but I long for the day when the overall feel of the NAG Inbox can be just a little bit more mature. Outstanding job on the rest of the magazine though; I especially like the latest page layout and design, which almost makes me dread the next design change. Lastly, to whoever's decision it is each month to put gigabytes worth of gaming related videos on the DVD, please accept my big huge thanks.

P.S. A mesotron is a hadron with a baryon number of 0."

*I get your point. However, it's almost always the younger readers who bother to take the time to write letters. By the way, your thumb-suck statistics are more or less correct. It seems to me that older people just don't have the time to write a letter to a magazine anymore because they're too busy looking up information on the Internet about particle accelerators, and then when they do write, it's to complain about the kids of today. :) Sorry, I know I said I wouldn't give you a sassy reply when I replied to your mail, but that was earlier in the day. But seriously, what I said is true. If you old farts out there would take a few minutes to write a letter, then perhaps the overall 'maturity' of the letters page will improve. However, I suspect that I might be at the root of the problem. Here are some facts separated by full stops: It is fun replying to people on these pages. Sometimes, I actually laugh at my own replies (some people find this weird). I simply love getting letters from readers no matter what they have to say. Usually, the younger the reader is the more honest the letter is. I always reply to all the letters I get. That said, if I really thought that any of my replies seriously offended anyone I wouldn't do it anymore – I'm talking to intelligent (well, mostly) people here who know how to take a joke like they can take a rail gun to the head and laugh it off. Ed.*

FROM: Not saying

SUBJECT: Software and stuff

**"AFTER READING LAST MONTH'S** issue of NAG I just felt that there was something missing. So I thought about it and I realized that NAG doesn't really cover the software side of computers. It's true that whenever something major comes about NAG does cover it, but it would be cool to have a software section, where we could hear professional opinions on which messenger to use or which browser you prefer. [I'll stop it right there, Ed]

*I replied to this person and recommended SACM [SA Computer Magazine – the other magazine we do] for his software needs. Not a few hours later and I get a reply back from him and he's trying to sell me a new telephone system. Now I'm wondering if this was all just an elaborate sales pitch. I like Telkom, there I said it. I've got a 4MB ADSL line that is rock and roll solid [98.354% of the time] and I can play online multiplayer games all night long with an average ping of 20. Now why on Earth would I want to change all of that just to save 20 cents a minute. Ed.*

FROM: Francois

SUBJECT: Being an Editor

**"AFTER LOOKING AROUND AT** possible careers for myself, and going to career counsellors [this was your first big mistake. I was told I'd have a great



## NAG FAN ARTWORK

This is what we received during the month. If you can insert, use or create a piece of gaming artwork incorporating the NAG logo, you might also end up here for your three lines of fame. In no order of importance:



**Chris Erasmus:** "I made this little guy in the Spore Creature Creator. I took a picture of my NAG with my phone and used Paint to hand it to him... He was so happy!"



**Koen Broumels:** "The best car for the best racing game ever."

future as a dairy farm public relations officer – the counsellors really had no clue, Ed] etc., I chose to aim for Editor, now this does not mean editing only gaming magazines etc., but general editing of all printed material. I was told that I need to do a BA Language degree, but have no clue what subjects that would be. So, being an Editor yourself, what advice could you give me? Could you please give me a description of the editing process, what subjects I'd have to take in university/college and such? It would be greatly appreciated."

*The role of editor isn't really what you might imagine or see in the movies [although The Devil Wears Prada is as close to 100% accurate as you can get]. I'll try and explain. As the editor, you are the face and personality of the magazine. Therefore, your readers, advertisers and/or content providers need to have faith in your abilities. This can require some Oscar-award potential acting at times. All the spelling and text checking is handled by the copy editor. Although you do need to know how to write fairly well, the most important thing in this business is an eye for detail and knowing your facts... like John Carmack doesn't work for Epic Games. I've been playing games since I was very young, back in a time when 8-bit home computers were just starting to gain a foothold [the Commodore 64 was my first baby]. You also need a more or less keen business sense, know how to communicate with people and also know when to take abuse and when to dish it out. Time management, organisational skills and a good work ethic are also critical, even though I don't have any of these skills myself. I'm only really here and doing this job because it's what I've always wanted to do and I always get what I want. Simple really. However, after all is said and done – stay away, it's a lot harder than it looks, especially for someone like me, who is inherently lazy and disorganised. So to summarise, forget the BA Language degree and go for drama, communication and a few weeks at the local fire station so you know how to put out fires. Ed.*

**FROM:** Pieter

**SUBJECT:** Nobody's that perfect

**"OKAY. AS IS TRADITION,** I just want to thank all you hard working people for managing to churn out such a good magazine every month since, like, 2000, and I can gladly say that the August issue has been your best issue so far. Spore! Just one thing I noticed recently was all the mail you got from people regarding the perpetual typos, and this here thing called "deadlines". You guys really had a good argument and all, but I'd just like to weigh that up against how you guys are critically panning more and more games over their (sadly) ever-present bugs / glitches / hitches / whatever. I just think you should wear a script writers / animators / producers / whatever boots for a change, and not go so hard on them. They're people too, with red-headed bosses and budget constraints breathing down their necks, and may not have time to patch up the more minor leaks in time for the game's release [except the folks at Maxis, wow!]. Yeah, I know "there's no excusing a buggy game, because games aren't cheap", but just remember: What is broken can be fixed / patched / hacked / cracked / whatever. At least on the PC, except if it's on Steam."

*Some things you say are true. How we can point a finger / sneer / mock / judge when we're not perfect / amazing / awesome / brilliant ourselves. Well, the simple answer is that we can because we're the gaming press. You'll be amazed at what you can get away with / into / out from by throwing your credentials around. Look, it's our job to report on games and their positives and negatives and I'm sure you'll find that NAG is more exciting than almost all of these other places combined, which means we're always looking for the good in games before we talk about the bad. Except for the Transformers game – that was pure misery wrapped in soggy dough. Last thing, you can patch games on Steam. Ed.*

**FROM:** Daniel

**SUBJECT:** Suggestion: Annual PCF vs. NAG

**"I'M AN AVID READER** of both your magazines and I had a thought that might interest you guys... Seeing as both your fine publications are mainly gaming/hardware orientated I had the idea of having a yearly competition between your Magazine crews in a gaming / build off heat. My suggestions for the gaming part would be that you put your best strategy guys against each other in a best of three, and in the FPS department you have your best FPS guys competing in the same best of format. For the build off part my suggestion is that you guys take the components e.g.: motherboards chips graphics cards etc and then put them through their paces with benchmark tests and FPS test on the games and applications you decide on. I personally (though I doubt that means much) think that this would be a great article for both your publications. Could I get some feedback to find out what you guys think."

*Sounds great, but who or what is this PC Format thing you speak of? I've asked the guys in the office and nobody seems to know... Okay, just kidding. :) True story, we were going to do a CoD4 exhibition match at rAge this year, but we had to postpone it because all of the people on our team are working at the show. End of the day, we're probably going to have a Quake III CTF match at some point in the near future and when we do, we'll let you know what happened. Ed. NAG*

## ON THE FORUM

**QUESTION:** A South African watchdog group wants violent videogames and music taken off shelves. Do you think the country will stand for this?

**Chainsaw Dude:** "No. Frankly, people in this country get what they want, for better or worse."

**Domanskip:** "Yes. Whatever is in the media supersedes logic."

**Gh0sT\_828:** "Maybe. Hundreds of such attempts have been made worldwide, and most fail. Whilst I doubt such an idea will succeed here, the vox populi should make itself heard. Media tends to triumph over logic."

**Awsomemic:** "No, too many people make their income from those types of media."

**creep:** "No. That would include 80% of entertainment media being taken off shelf's, Millions would be lost due to this. It would however make the piracy rate skyrocket. All the music and Games will simply be downloaded..."

**Phantom\_ZA:** "No, as long as a desire for such content exists, so will the media that includes said desired content."

**Enigma:** "No, removing such media would cause more harm than good."

**ioioioio:** "No. Firstly, they make a weak argument to begin with and secondly there's a nifty little thing called a "con-sti-tu-tion" and our constitution in particular would protect us from such bigots."

**cr@zydude:** "Our constitution gives us the freedom of choice for things like this. It simply isn't possibly at the moment."

**DXeXodus:** "Our country won't stand for this. If we take all violent games of the shelves it would only arise in increased piracy activity. People will get the games they want. One way or another."

**Glenn:** "Did Jack The Ripper play video games in 1888 to influence him in committing all those crimes? Umm no! I don't think Ted Bundy or Charles Manson did either. If this kind of media is removed from the shelves, consumers will just source it elsewhere..."

**Machine:** "I'm not surprised at the least, I still think it's absolute bullsh\*t bringing in extreme censorship."

**FEN1X:** "No, because that would open a can of worms too big and then every other thing that people think cause reactions would be banned as well (like beer)."

**Takiro:** "No: They are one group vs. the entire video game community and just about every teenager, not the mention the companies that give us our games and music (who have a little more sway than a bunch of lonely, upset parents)."

**Q-Man:** "No, I think they will eventually realise that it's not the games, but rather the ninja swords that are to blame. Wait, that doesn't sound right... oh yes, it's not the games or the ninja swords, it's the movie industry that is to blame. Or was it the music industry? Heaven forbid people take personal responsibility for anything."

**ShoGunSama:** "Well, before they do that, they should remove the e.tv Saturday midnight movies, I'm sure that's teaching kids more nasty things than those musics/games."

**echo:** "No. Apart from all the constitution stuff, these people aren't bright enough to actually succeed in something like this."

**HAVE YOUR SAY ON THE NAG FORUMS:**  
<http://forums.tidemia.co.za>



# RIP: FLAGSHIP STUDIOS

## Hellgate: London and Mythos developer "open only to settle affairs".

**T**HE DEVELOPMENT STUDIO BEHIND *Hellgate: London* and *Mythos* has closed its doors, following on the news last month where Flagship Studios' CEO and former Blizzard frontman Bill Roper confirmed a number of staff were laid off.

In speaking to *Gamecyte*, co-founder and COO Max Schaefer mentioned attempts to save the company.

"We were in very advanced negotiations with a couple of people for deals that would have kept Flagship open and would have kept everything running. And in fact, for a good while it was looking like a near-certainty that one of those would have come to fruition," he said.

"In the end, it was just too entangled to get a good deal in place, and so we had to close down. It was really kind of a wrenching, horrible period actually, and we learned a lot from it. We'd do things differently next time for sure."

"We all were up all night, every night, not getting any

sleep, working every day trying to get it to work out for everyone, and in the end it just didn't," Schaefer added.

The studio's former Seattle team (along with Schaefer and *Mythos* leader designer Travis Baldree) has since reformed as Runic Games. The intellectual property rights over *Mythos* have been claimed by South Korean company Hanbitsoft, as it was offered as collateral for loans taken by Flagship earlier this year.

"From the concept perspective, don't rely on anything that's about realism or technology, focus on something that involves creativity and gameplay," he said. "No new company can really compete on production values." The second thing on the business perspective I would suggest looking at digital distribution – whether it's you or a publisher distributing it, it doesn't matter, but prepare for that market. Then you've already narrowed down your choice of platforms, which is either PC, mobile/iPhone, modding potentially, XBLA and PSN."

## FRESH OUT THE STEAMER

The *X-COM* series, arguably the best tactical strategy games and forerunner to the modern *UFO* series is now available for download on Steam. The games are priced at a very reasonable \$4.99 a pop or \$13.49 for the whole package comprising *X-COM: UFO Defense*, *X-COM: Terror from the Deep*, *X-COM: Apocalypse*, the space shooter *X-COM: Interceptor* and the blaster-action *X-COM: Enforcer*. If you've never experienced this sparkling piece of gaming history or lament the days long gone when you still had a working copy of *TftD*, head on over to [www.steampowered.com](http://www.steampowered.com) and get ready to save the world from alien invasion just like we did back in the old school.



## VIVA LA REVOLUTION!

Stardock, the publishers behind runaway success *Sins of a Solar Empire*, has decided to take a stand against unfair distribution and other violations of PC gamers' rights during Seattle's recently held Penny Arcade Expo. Described as "a statement of principles that it hopes will encourage the PC game industry to adopt standards that are more supportive of PC gamers" by the publishers, and supported by Gas Powered Games Chris Taylor, the statement contains a number of powerful yet somewhat idealistic goals for the PC gaming industry to follow, but going by Stardock's reputation, it's clear that such principles can and do work.

A few items from the list:

- Gamers shall have the right to demand that games be released in a finished state.
- Gamers shall have the right to expect that the minimum requirements for a game will mean that the game will play adequately on that computer.
- Gamers shall have the right to demand that a single-player game not force them to be connected to the Internet every time they wish to play.
- Gamers shall have the right that games which are installed to the hard drive shall not require a CD/DVD to remain in the drive to play.



## TAKE IT TO GO

Are you getting tired of all this 'next gen' business? Do you long for the days when you could kick back with some classic 16-bit game play, but didn't want to fiddle with the often dodgy world of emulation? Then look no further than the awesome, the amazing, the "thank goodness it's not the Nomad", SEGA Megadrive... portable. 100% endorsed by SEGA, this nifty little gadget packs 20 built-in first-party games, composite TV-out and all the three-button mashing you could ask for in a form factor half the size of a PSP, all for just £30 (excluding postage and packaging).

So, just what titles do you get with this gem of technology? While we encourage you to visit [www.segaretro.net](http://www.segaretro.net) to grab the full list (and, of course, place your order!), you can look forward to such classics as *Altered Beast*, *Golden Axe*, *Shadow Dancer*, *Columns 3*, *Ecco the Dolphin* and *Sonic & Knuckles*. It's devices like this that make us look back at the past 20 years of gaming with a smile; anybody, no matter their age, would benefit from having the SEGA Megadrive Handheld in their life.





## IRON-CAST CUTS-CENES

**THE REELS HAVE BEEN** rolling at EA's secret film studio in preparation for the long-awaited sequel to 2000's *Red Alert 2*, and boy have they been filming an awesome cast. To start, there's the superb Tim Curry taking on a chief Soviet role, as well as crazy Swede Peter Stormare (recently of *Prison Break* fame) as the brains behind Russia's time machine. Fulfilling the roles of obligatory female hotties are Kelly Hu, Jenny McCarthy, the American Gladiator Gina Carano and Gemma Atkinson, who's recently been climbing the ranks of television fame thanks to her role in *Hollyoaks*. J.K. Simmons (*Law & Order*, *Spider-Man*) portrays the US as President Howard T. Ackerman and George Takei, otherwise known as *Star Trek*'s Mr. Sulu, takes on the role of Emperor Yoshino of the Rising Sun faction.



### WILL WORK FOR GOLD

For those of you in the know, you'd no doubt be aware that Massively Multiplayer Online Games (MMOGs) have a dark, seedy underworld of in-game currency and character trading or levelling, if not – well, now you do. What few people may be aware of is just how big the world of gold farming and power levelling is. Recent studies conducted by the Manchester University have revealed that in excess of half a million people throughout the world are employed by this usually illegal industry. The majority of those are Chinese, with over 400,000 people responsible for gold farming alone. It's a concern that the virtual worlds many of us inhabit are so rife with illegally acquired currency and 'gamers' looking to jump up a few levels without putting in the effort, but then again, the employment of over half a million people worldwide in what is essentially a virtual industry says something for the other side of the argument, regardless of how unfair it may be.



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## snippets

YOUR ESSENTIAL INFO, NOW  
IN BITE-SIZED PORTIONS!HERETIC AND HEXEN  
OPEN UP

In a long-awaited move, Raven Software has finally handed over all the reigns to the source code of both *Heretic* and its semi-sequel *Hexen*. Previously only available under strict conditions, both titles are now ready and able to serve the open-source modding community or those just looking to tinker under the hood of one of Raven's top brands, courtesy of the GNU General Public License. Head on over to Sourceforge for the download links. Happy modding!

DON'T MESS WITH THE  
DEMOLITION MAN

As *Guitar Hero World Tour* nears its release date, more artists' contributions to the game are coming into focus. British rocker Sting will have his likeness on display as a playable character. The musician says he's chuffed to be in a videogame, but he's not terribly good at it, claiming his kids gave him a run for his money when he tried it out for the first time recently.

Also stepping up is legendary rock band Tool. While none of the members will be in-game characters, the band teamed up with Activision to put together a playable arena in the style of their music videos, and also offered their tracks *Schism* and *Parabola* from the smash-hit album *Lateralus* as well as *Vicarious* from the 2006 album *10,000 Days*.

## FAR CRY 2'S BOX OF TRICKS

*Far Cry 2*'s Collector's Edition for Europe has been revealed, and it's awesome. Inside the wooden box you'll find the game disc itself, a limited-edition T-shirt, an art book, a map of the entire 50km<sup>2</sup> game area and a making-of DVD. Scheduled for release in late October, *Far Cry 2* is set to knock the socks off FPS gaming as we know it, African-style.

EVERYONE'S  
A CRITIC

**I**N A BOLD YET not surprising fashion, Peter Molyneux – the British developer behind Lionhead Studios – has decided to put his game industry knowledge to the test and step into the world of the game reviewer. The first game to step up to his chopping block? Why, none other than his very own *Fable 2*! While not being at all serious about this, the Neux (as he is affectionately known) has gone out on a limb and not given the game a perfect score, but rather a very humble 9/10. Citing it as “the best, most complete game I’ve ever worked on” and making all of us squeal for joy at the use of the word “complete” (which is an often-missing component from his games over the past few years), Molyneux is continuing to crank up his famous hype machine in preparation for the game’s very, very close release.



## THE BUCK STOPS HERE

PC gamers hoping to grind the *Gears of War* for a second time are likely to be disappointed by Cliff Bleszinski of Epic Games recent announcement, stating quite clearly that *Gears of War 2* will remain an Xbox 360 exclusive until the day it dies. Now, any discerning gamer will know that statements like this tend to hold about as much water as Swiss cheese sliced with a lancer, since it took ages for a PC version of the original title to even enter planning stages, but if anyone asks, the official word is, “We’ve decided we’re not going to do a PC version this time around”.

## THEY SAID IT...

“(Many gamers) love the current trend of photorealistic grey/brown games which I personally don’t care for. It’s not like I dislike those, but it’s so prevalent – there’s so many of them. It’s getting where I can’t tell them apart.”

Jay Wilson, Lead Designer on *Diablo III*

“I think that it’s a fine line between observing the traditions and evolving the gameplay, and the way we tackle that problem is boiling down *Tomb Raider* to its true essence, which isn’t about making blind jumps and falls to death and tractor controls.”

Eric Lindstrom, Creative director on *Tomb Raider: Underworld*

“Traditional RTS games have you controlling faceless soldiers and band boxing your way to victory as you send these generic units to their death, wave after wave. That paradigm is stale, and it needs to change. We believe attachment is the key to reinvigorating the genre.”

Mark Noseworthy, producer on *Dawn of War II*

“PC developers need to start considering the PC as a unique platform rather than a gaming machine that happens to be in your den rather than your living room.”

John Carmack, co-founder of id Software

## NICE, ER... PSP?

It’s not finalised. Heck, it’s not even anywhere near official, but if rumours and 3D mock-ups are to be believed, Belkin is getting ready to rock the iPhone’s world upside down. Taking the form of a rubberised skin that fits around your iPhone, this device enhances any iPhone gaming experience by providing the user with eight gaming buttons and an analogue stick, interfacing with the phone through its serial port. While it’s difficult to confirm the truth behind the device, Belkin is no stranger to third-party accessories, having produced many for a wide range of devices, not to mention a selection of iPhone skins and carry pouches.





## BY THE EMPEROR'S WILL

**THQ SEEMS TO HAVE** a growing fondness for the Warhammer 40K brand. Continuing from the success of Relic's *Dawn of War*, THQ is delving into the third-person action side of things with *Warhammer 40,000: Space Marine* – a gut-busting, balls-to-the-wall action game featuring a powersuit-clad Imperial Space Marine tearing his way through the armies of Chaos.

Jam-packed full of buzz words like "intimate brutality", "cinematic" and "scope of war", *Space Marine* promises not to pull any punches during combat. What's evident from the recently leaked gameplay video is that players will have access to the classic chain sword and bolter pistol, using a combo technique of run and gun, followed by up-close and very personal melee combat. Players will also be able to accumulate

overkill during particularly gruesome battles – a resource that, when activated, puts the game into a first-person, beat-your-opponent's-face-in perspective that feeds off quicktime button presses to get the job done.

The developers are truly aiming for a classic 40K feel when it comes to architecture and the combat environments, which look straight out of the lore-drenched codex books of the tabletop game. A strong gothic influence is present in the Imperial Hive worlds, while spacecraft and whirling skies occupy the upper portion of the harshly bright outdoor environments.

*Space Marine* is still a while away from hitting the shelves, but already it looks set to be great addition to the hard-hitting, combat-heavy action games we've seen over the last few years.

## BLESS HER LITTLE HEART

Score one for Team Videogamer, *GTA* now reportedly saves lives! When 11-year-old Audrey Plique and her family where on their way to visit relatives in the US state of Illinois, they ran into a spot of bad luck and landed their car upside down on the side of the road. Having advanced knowledge of car wrecks thanks to her *GTA* experiences, the young girl immediately set about pulling her family from the overturned car for fear of its imminent explosion. According to mom, Audrey saved her life thanks to the valuable lessons learnt from playing the *GTA* series. We're not quite ready to argue over the likelihood of spontaneous vehicular combustion, and never mind the whole "11-year-old playing *GTA*" thing, we're just glad that at least one parent in the world sees some good in the game, no matter how misguided.

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### DRM NIGHTMARES FOR SPORE

Not even a week in the limelight and *Spore* is suffering the nit-pickers' onslaught. Hordes of furious 'reviewers' hit the Amazon sales link to down-rate the game's score horribly, citing DRM issues as their main hassle – the game can reportedly only be installed up to three times before users must resort to the EA technical department for assistance. Just why exactly any user has reinstalled more than three times within the first few days of release aside, installation issues like this need to be resolved quickly and quietly if *Spore* intends on being the perfect Sim-everything.

Apparently not bothered and quite confident about the sales figures the game is likely to achieve, Will Wright bluntly states, "We would rather have the Metacritic and sales of *Sims 2* than the Metacritic and sales of *Half-Life*."

### McFARLANE PREPARES FOR WAR

In true Microsoft style, the company is gearing up to make a big deal out of *Halo Wars*. The upcoming RTS release will be accompanied by a collection of action figures produced by veteran toy makers McFarlane Toys. Initially, there will be four sets of three figures available, each figure standing about 2.5" tall and likely to cost anywhere from R100 up for a pack of three. While they won't be fully articulate, only bending at the waist, these figures will undoubtedly become popular collector's items and will feature the usual build and paint quality we've come to expect from McFarlane.



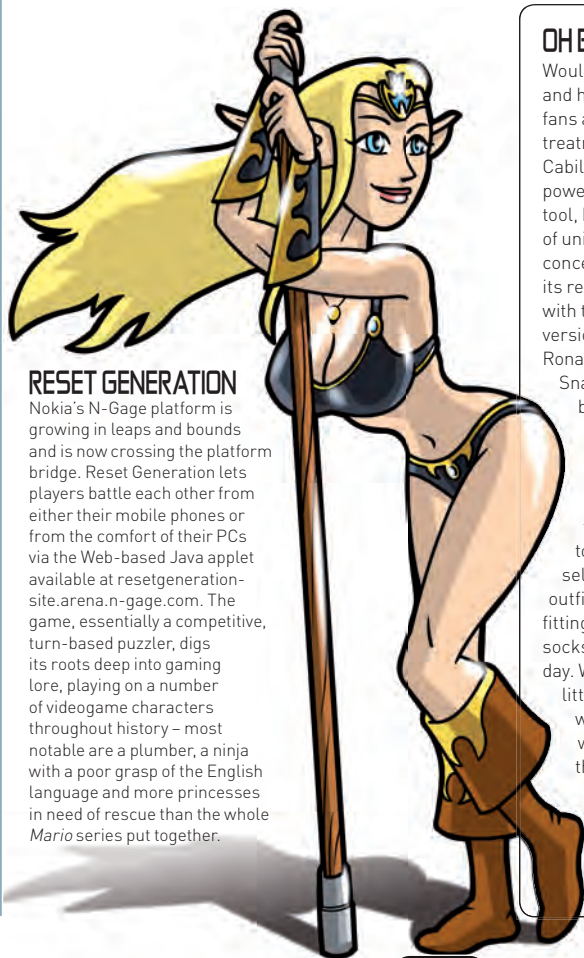
## BURN BABY BURN!

**IT'S HARDLY COMMON FOR** ten hours of gameplay to be made available for free download, but that's exactly what Criterion, the developers behind hit-and-run arcade racer *Burnout Paradise* have done. Named *Burnout Paradise Bikes*, this new, totally free and long-awaited add-on will give players access to motorcycles for the first time ever in the *Burnout* series. In addition to the new beasts, 70 online freeburn challenges and 38 timed Burnout Rides (like Routes, just for bikes) will be available to players. There's a definite focus on online

social play with the update, encouraging players to band together and cruise through the city at 200mph.

On top of all of that, day/night cycles with weather effects have been introduced. Players can choose to fix the time of day, have it cycle through 24-minute intervals or snap to real-world time, adjusting as the day draws long (or the morning nigh, as is often the case).

The update should be available by time you read this for both Xbox 360 and PS3 versions of the game.



### RESET GENERATION

Nokia's N-Gage platform is growing in leaps and bounds and is now crossing the platform bridge. Reset Generation lets players battle each other from either their mobile phones or from the comfort of their PCs via the Web-based Java applet available at resetgeneration-site.arena.n-gage.com. The game, essentially a competitive, turn-based puzzler, digs its roots deep into gaming lore, playing on a number of videogame characters throughout history – most notable are a plumber, a ninja with a poor grasp of the English language and more princesses in need of rescue than the whole *Mario* series put together.

### OH BEHAVE

Would-be fashion experts and hardened fighting-game fans alike are getting special treatment over in Japan. Soul Cabilur IV, together with its powerful character-building tool, had spurred on hundreds of unique and sometimes concerning creations since its release. Not content with the community's *SCIV* versions of Cloud Strife, Ronald McDonald and Sold Snake, Namco Bandai has been releasing DLC for the game featuring sassy maids' outfits and other naughty things and is now set to take the fantasy role-playing to the next level with a selection of schoolgirl outfits. Plaid skirts, tight-fitting blazers and knee-high socks are the order of the day. We're starting to get a little concerned as to just where Namco is going with this, but hopefully the DLC sleaze will calm down and actually start offering players a few new spiky bits and broadswords to play with.



### THE EVOLUTION OF: God Games



Little Computer People [1985]



Populous [1989]



SimLife [1992]



Dungeon Keeper [1997]



Black & White [2001]



Viva Piñata [2006]



Spore [2008]





## CONSOLE WATCH



**A**FTER ENSEMBLE STUDIOS HAS finished *Halo Wars*, Microsoft will shut the studio down, describing it as a "a fiscally-rooted decision that keeps [Microsoft Game Studios] on its growth path". Microsoft also said, "the Ensemble leadership team will form a new studio and has agreed to provide ongoing support for *Halo Wars* as well as work on other projects with Microsoft Game Studios". Also, "Microsoft is working to place as many Ensemble employees who do not move to the newly formed studio into open positions within Microsoft as possible." Ensemble Studios, founded in the mid-'90s, is best known for its RTS series *Age of Empires*.

Microsoft has dropped the price of the Xbox 360 Arcade SKU to \$199 (R1,500), making it the cheapest console SKU on the market. "We are thrilled to be the first next-generation console on the market to reach \$199, a price that invites everyone to enjoy Xbox 360," said Don Matrick, senior vice president of the Interactive Entertainment Business at Microsoft.

Nintendo's shares rose by 3.7% after the company increased its profit forecast. The company increased its end-of-year profit forecast by 26%, which prompted three brokerages to raise their investment ratings. August 29 saw the company's shares climb 8.7% since July 2007. "For Nintendo to make such an aggressive jump in forecasts at this stage suggests that not only does it have a good idea about the holiday season, it knows the post-Christmas restocking demand and this looks very favourable," Pelham Smithers, an analyst at Pali, wrote in a report dated August 29.

The Nintendo DS rocks the Japanese sales charts again, the hand-held console sitting at the top of the charts for the month of August. The DS sold 333,000 units (down 29% compared to the previous year's result), but this is the first time the DS has been such a consecutively top seller in Japan. The PSP got second place with 292,000 units sold, the Wii selling 181,000 units while the 360 boosted up to 45,000 units sold (due to *Tales of Vesperia*). The best-selling game of the month was *Rhythm Tengoku Gold* for the DS, selling 625,000 units. *Phantasy Star Portable* for the PSP sold 572,000 units.

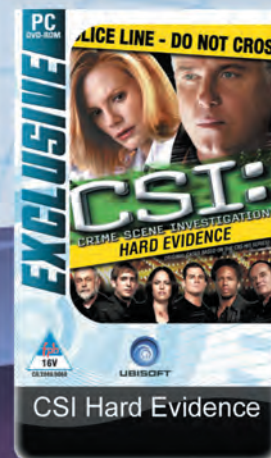
Electronic Arts has slashed €30 (R339) off the recommended retail price of the *Rock Band Instrumental Edition* pack in Europe. The bundle was released for the Xbox 360 in Europe at €168 (R1,899) but required the game to be purchased separately at a further €69 (R780). The bundle will now sell for €139 (R1,571).



# EXCLUSIVE

PC  
DVD-ROM

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### INTO EVERY GENERATION...

Gather round, Joss Whedon fans, I've got some good news and I've got some bad news for you. Bad news first, because it's tragic and deserves the spotlight here – the upcoming *Firefly* MMO has been experiencing a few misfires during launch and will have its development cycle pushed forward an undisclosed amount of time. Read: no *Firefly* MMO for a while.

Done weeping? Great, here's the good news – we're getting a *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* MMO instead. Continuing on from the world shown to us at the end of season 7 (and consequently explored in the follow-on comic books) players will enter a game full of slayers, watchers, witches, dorks and groupies. In an interesting twist of tradition, the game will be playable both from a typical 3D perspective as well as through a Web-based, 2D Flash client, with the two game types being able to interact in ways we're not entirely sure about yet, although the 2D version will reportedly see public Beta before the year is out to give players a taste of the action.



### FILL 'ER UP

Marketing is a tough game, especially when you reach the top. Not content with throwing money at an advertising campaign filled with Websites and billboards to promote the UK release of *Mercenaries 2: World in Flames*, EA decided to cater to the consumers' sensitive bits – their aching wallets. The publishers took over a small filling station in northern London, fully converted it to look like a military bunker and proceeded to top up anyone's car with £40 worth of petrol. Mile-long queues and angry residents aside, those lucky enough to score some free fuel where delighted at the campaign and swore newfound devotion to the *Mercenaries* brand. Unfortunately, the giveaway was promptly called off by the authorities, citing it as an irresponsible media stunt and demanding apologies, regardless of the success EA had with a similar event in LA recently.

British MP Lynne Featherstone told reporters "Trying to recreate Venezuelan-style fuel riots on the streets of London is completely irresponsible and downright dangerous. Whilst a lucky few might have got some free petrol, hundreds of local residents have faced misery on their daily journeys this morning. They deserve an apology."



## TECMO MADNESS

**I**T'S ALL CRAZY LIKE a ninja over at Japanese publisher Tecmo lately as they litigate, resign and decline their way into the news.

Tecmo president Yoshimi Yasuda has resigned for "personal reasons", Yasuda's exit from Tecmo coming in hot on the heels of numerous lawsuits launched like nuclear missiles against the company. In early June, Tomonobu Itagaki filed a lawsuit against Tecmo for "unpaid completion bonuses" and even shot a separate suit against Yasuda for "disingenuous statements" made towards the *Dead or Alive* creator.

Soon after, two more Tecmo employees filed a class-action suit on behalf of 300 of the publisher's staff, demanding compensation for unpaid wages. Tecmo has since denied reports that dozens of employees were set to walk out.

A settlement was recently reached with the two employees representing the Tecmo staff, although the exact nature of the settlement is unknown as the statement released by Tecmo is rather sparse. It is unclear if Tecmo is paying out the 8.3 million yen (\$77,000) the staff demanded.

"On July 16<sup>th</sup>, two of our employees brought suit against our company regarding unpaid overtime in the Tokyo District Court and presented a proposed settlement," the statement read. "On September

1, 2008, a judicial settlement was reached."

There have still been no announcements regarding the lawsuit from Itagaki against Tecmo.

Out of the blue, Square Enix set an offer on the table to buy Tecmo, which Tecmo has declined as it claims it is more interested in pursuing a possible merger with Koei. Square Enix responded by issuing a statement asking the publisher to detail the merger and justify its choice. Tecmo did not respond, and Square Enix withdrew its offer with yet another (if slightly snotty-sounding) statement and a mention that they won't attempt a hostile takeover.

"The Company yesterday received a written notice of the rejection of the Proposal from the board of directors of Tecmo. Followed by the notice, the Company immediately requested Tecmo for explanation of some issues to receive no response to it, even reasons of the rejection," read the statement.

"Under such circumstances, the Company is unable to make appropriate modifications to major terms of the Proposal including the TOB price, and determines that it is extremely difficult to continue the discussions with Tecmo based on the Proposal. The Company, therefore, has decided to withdraw from the Proposal."

### HEADS UP!

Sony's long-anticipated Bluetooth headset is finally getting ready to make the rounds. Available in either a standalone pack or bundled with the upcoming title *SOCOM: Confrontation*, the headset will allow you to chat to your mates through a VoIP system built into the PS3. Sony claims the device will have a talk-time of up to eight hours, up to 300 hours of standby and a range of ten feet, which is about on par with most Bluetooth headsets. Expect this bad boy to set you back between R400 and R500 when it hits the local shores, as its estimated Japanese price will be ¥5,000 at release towards the end of October.



### GAMING CHARTS

**Look & Listen**  
DVD • CD • GAMES — MP3 • ACCESSORIES

#### LOOK & LISTEN RECOMMENDS...

##### PLAYSTATION 3

- 1 Saints Row 2
- 2 BioShock
- 3 Midnight Club 3
- 4 Too Human
- 5 Facebreaker

##### XBOX 360

- 1 Gears of War 2
- 2 Fable 2
- 3 Tiger Woods PGA Tour 09
- 4 Mercenaries 2: World in Flames
- 5 Ratchet & Clank Tools of Destruction

##### PLAYSTATION 2

- 1 Star Wars: The Force Unleashed
- 2 FIFA 09
- 3 James Bond: Quantum of Solace
- 4 MotoGP 08
- 5 Summer Athletics

##### PC

- 1 Spore
- 2 Sims Apartments
- 3 Far Cry 2
- 4 Fallout 3
- 5 Warhammer Online: Age of Reckoning

##### PSP

- 1 Secret Agent Clank
- 2 God of War: Chains of Olympus Platinum
- 3 Midnight Club 4 Remixed
- 4 Pro Evolution Soccer 09
- 5 Crash Bandicoot: Mind over Mutant

##### Wii

- 1 Super Smash Bros Brawl
- 2 Wii Fit
- 3 Big Beach Sports
- 4 Tiger Woods PGA Tour 09
- 5 Disney: Sing it! Featuring Camp Rock



July figures provided by GfK  
[www.gfksa.co.za](http://www.gfksa.co.za)

##### PLAYSTATION 3

- 1 Grand Theft Auto IV
- 2 Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns of the Patriots
- 3 Gran Turismo 5 Prologue
- 4 Race Driver: GRID
- 5 Ratchet & Clank: Tools of Destruction

##### XBOX 360

- 1 Grand Theft Auto IV
- 2 Forza Motorsport 2
- 3 Viva Piñata
- 4 Transformers: The Game
- 5 Race Driver: GRID

##### PLAYSTATION 2

- 1 Need For Speed: Most Wanted
- 2 FIFA 08
- 3 Rugby 08
- 4 Need For Speed: ProStreet
- 5 Transformers: The Game

##### PC

- 1 Prince of Persia Trilogy Pack
- 2 Mass Effect
- 3 Assassin's Creed
- 4 The Sims 2 Deluxe
- 5 Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2

##### PSP

- 1 Burnout Legends
- 2 Ben 10: Protector of the Earth
- 3 FIFA 08
- 4 Need for Speed: ProStreet
- 5 FIFA 07

##### Wii

- 1 Wii Sports
- 2 Wii Fit + board
- 3 Mario Kart
- 4 Wii Play
- 5 Super Mario Galaxy





## PREPARE FOR PANDORA

**PANDORA - THE LONG-AWAITED** spiritual successor to GamePark's GP2X is almost ready for shipping. For the uninitiated, Pandora is a tiny, handheld device capable of running a trimmed-down Linux OS, seen as a cross between a DS, PSP and palmtop. While the device is not designed to compete directly with any popular gaming console, it will undoubtedly gather huge support from the homebrew/emulation crowd eager for a device powerful and versatile enough to run anything from SNES emulation to a buttery-smooth *Quake II* to full-on Web browsing and office productivity tools.

Under the hood, the Pandora is a hardware geek's dream. It sports a 600MHz ARM processor (almost double the PSP's maximum clock speed), 128MB RAM (The PSP has only 32MB) a touch screen capable of an 800 x 480 resolution, two analogue sticks, the usual

slew of console buttons and a QWERTY keyboard. It also packs Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, two SD card slots and a USB hub capable of reading almost all USB devices. To top it all off, Pandora's developers claim the 4000mAh battery will support up to ten hours of moderate usage, up to eight hours of sustained usage and a record-breaking 100 hours of low-usage music playback!

Initial runs of the device have been sent to selected software developers so they can dip their feet in, with the first batch of 3,000 units scheduled for release before Christmas at a price of £200 excluding shipping. While three thousand-odd rand is certainly a bit much for just a handheld gaming device, Pandora is so much more, offering users and developers unparalleled opportunity to expand the device beyond anything currently available.



### SQUARE-EPIXX

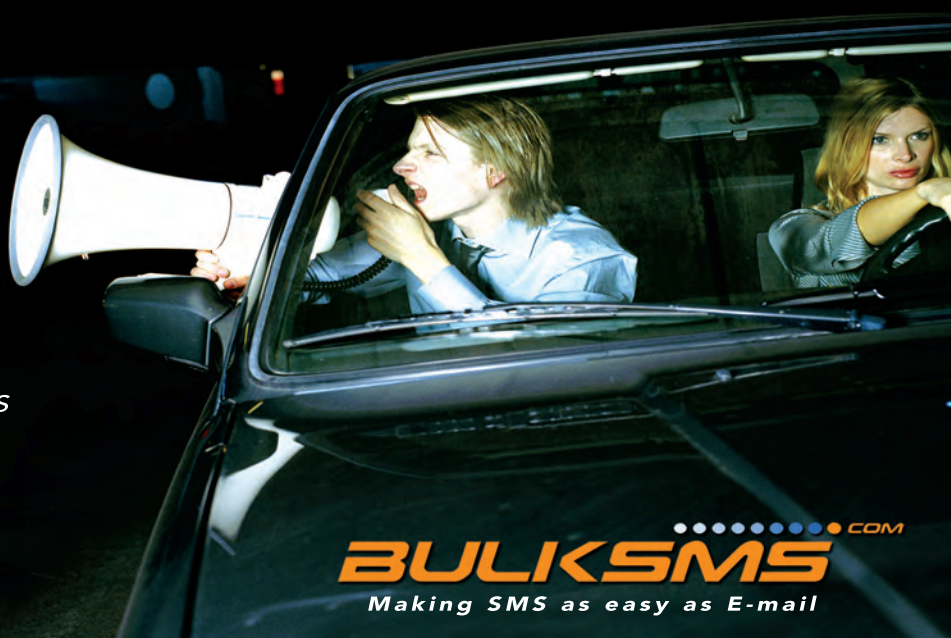
So, you think you're hardcore, eh? Think you could handle an 18-hour boss battle, and still not get him down? That's exactly what happened to hardened *Final Fantasy XI* guild Beyond the Limitation in their recent attempt at taking down the game's newly added boss - the Pandemonium Warden. Despite all supposed good intentions on Square-Enix's part, happily reminding players that they don't want their community's real lives to suffer while playing their game, numerous guild members reported having serious physical side effects from the epic encounter. Some players claim they passed out briefly, others stated that their stomachs couldn't handle the marathon and regurgitated their last meals and others claim they refused to go to the loo once during the whole battle, despite dire necessity.

After the reports swept the forums and enraged players banded together, Square-Enix re-evaluated the boss and decided to make a few adjustments. The Pandemonium Warden, as well as a handful of other high-level bosses in the game have had serious chunks taken out of their encounters, with Square-Enix reaffirming their commitment to the physical well-being of their players.

## There's an easier way.

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Making SMS as easy as E-mail





## THE PSP'S BRIGHT FUTURE

Sony has been hard at work in their attempts to boost sales of the PSP. While they're certainly doing well, nobody can deny the console playing second-fiddle to Nintendo's reigning handheld champion. So, what's the best way to gain market share without adding new products? Why, by spending a couple of bucks sprucing up existing hardware with much-needed updates and making sure the world knows just how much the old, outdated versions suck – of course!

Dubbed the PSP-3000, the new version comes packed with a brighter screen capable of showing a wider range of colours – resulting in more vibrant video and games, as well as the much-talked-about microphone, allowing users to VoIP chat when in Wi-Fi range. The machine has also had its physical form smoothed out a bit, as well as numerous other cosmetic changes. Another addition many users might find interesting is the availability of the device in a new, matte finish – countless hours spent wiping away fingerprints will soon be a thing of the past.



## BULLET FOR MY COLLECTOR'S EDITION

In a delightful jeer at the social responsibility stance of violent videogames, THQ is pulling out all the stops with the packaging of their collector's edition for the upcoming thug-luvvin' action/adventure *Saints Row 2*. The game box itself is designed to look like a gun, and in addition to a 3rd Street Saints poster and a map of Stilwater, will contain a 1GB flash drive shaped to look like a golden bullet.

# OCTOBER RELEASES

Subject to change  
Release list and special offers provided by [www.kalahari.net](http://www.kalahari.net)

| Date | Game   | Platforms    |
|------|--|--------------|
| 3    | Sacred 2: Fallen Angels Collector's Edition<br><i>[Pre-order and stand a chance to win new PC Collector's Editions valued at more than R3,000]</i> | PC           |
| 3    | Guild Wars: The Complete Collection  | PC           |
| 3    | Pure   | PS3, 360, PC |
| 10   | Brothers in Arms: Hell's Highway<br><i>[Free T-shirt with every pre-order (while stocks last)]</i>   | PS3, 360, PC |
| 10   | Brothers in Arms: Hell's Highway Collector's Edition<br><i>[Order and stand a chance to win a Collector's Edition bundle worth R3,000]</i>         | PS3, 360, PC |
| 10   | Brothers in Arms: Double Time  | Wii          |
| 10   | Midnight Club 4  | PS3, 360     |
| 10   | Midnight Club 4 Remix  | PSP          |
| 10   | Bella Sara   | DS, PC       |
| 10   | Luxor: Pharaoh's Challenge   | Wii          |
| 10   | Nonestry 2   | DS           |
| 10   | Toy Shop Tycoon  | DS           |
| 10   | Wild Earth   | Wii          |
| 10   | Shaun the Sheep  | DS           |
| 10   | Dancing Stage Supernova 2  | PS2          |
| 10   | Singstar: Hottest Hits   | PS2          |
| 10   | Baja Racing  | PS3          |
| 17   | Fracture   | PS3, 360     |
| 17   | Crash Bandicoot: Mind Over Mutant  | Multi        |
| 17   | Fable 2  | 360          |
| 17   | Fable 2: Limited Edition<br><i>[Order and stand a chance to win a Collector's Edition bundle worth R3,000]</i>                                     | 360          |
| 17   | Saints Row 2   | 360, PC      |
| 19   | Monster Madness: Grave Danger  | PS3          |
| 24   | Spider-Man: Web of Shadows   | Multi        |
| 24   | BioShock<br><i>[Pre-order for only R599.95. Save R100!]</i>  | PS3          |
| 24   | Far Cry 2<br><i>[Pre-order for only R299.95. Save R50!]</i>  | PC           |
| 24   | Far Cry 2 Collector's Edition  | PS3, 360, PC |
| 24   | Far Cry 2  | PS3, 360     |
| 24   | SBK 08   | PS3          |
| 24   | Rise of the Argonauts  | PS3, 360, PC |
| 24   | Lost in Blue 3   | DS           |
| 24   | Buzz Junior: Ace Racers  | PS2          |
| 24   | God of War: Chains of Olympus Platinum   | PSP          |
| 24   | Motorstorm: Pacific Rift   | PS3          |
| 24   | Pursuit Force: Extreme Justice Platinum  | PSP          |
| 24   | Singstar: Boy vs Girl Bands  | PS2          |
| 24   | SOCOM: Confrontation   | PS3          |

| Date | Game  | Platforms     |
|------|---|---------------|
| 24   | Brave: A Warrior's Tale   | PSP, Wii, 360 |
| 24   | Brave: Shaman's Challenge   | DS            |
| 24   | Ninja Town  | DS            |
| 24   | Raven Squad   | PC, 360       |
| 24   | Ferrari Challenge   | PS2           |
| 24   | Avatar: Into the Ferno  | PS2           |
| 24   | Bratz 09: Girls Really Rock   | PS2           |
| 24   | Saints Row 2  | PS3           |
| 24   | Sponge Bob: Globos of Doom  | PS2           |
| 30   | Dead Space  | PS3, 360, PC  |
| 31   | James Bond: Quantum of Solace   | Multi         |
| 31   | James Bond: Quantum of Solace Collector's Edition<br><i>[Order and stand a chance to win a Collector's Edition bundle worth R3,000]</i> | 360, PC       |
| 31   | Fallout 3<br><i>[Pre-order for only R299.95. Save R50!]</i>   | PC            |
| 31   | Fallout 3 Collector's Edition<br><i>[Order and stand a chance to win a Collector's Edition bundle worth R3,000]</i>                     | PS3, 360, PC  |
| 31   | Fallout 3   | PS3, 360      |
| 31   | WWE 2009  | 360, Wii, DS  |
| 31   | Dancing Stage Universe 2  | 360           |
| 31   | Disney: Sing It! Featuring Camp Rock  | Multi         |
| 31   | Disney: Sing It! Featuring Camp Rock (Bundle)   | Multi         |
| TBA  | Legendary   | PS3, 360, PC  |
| TBA  | Carnival Mini Golf  | Wii           |
| TBA  | MotoGP 08   | Multi         |
| TBA  | Blokus  | PSP           |
| TBA  | PES 09  | Multi         |
| TBA  | Zubo  | DS            |
| TBA  | Monopoly Here & Now Worldwide Edition   | Multi         |
| TBA  | Boogie Superstar  | Wii           |
| TBA  | Littlest Pet Shop: Garden   | DS            |
| TBA  | Littlest Pet Shop: Jungle   | DS            |
| TBA  | Littlest Pet Shop: Winter   | DS            |
| TBA  | Littlest Pet Shop   | Wii, PC       |
| TBA  | EA Sports Challenge   | Wii           |
| TBA  | Command & Conquer Red Alert 3<br><i>[Pre-order for R518.36]</i>   | 360           |
| TBA  | Command & Conquer Red Alert 3<br><i>[Pre-order for R346.46]</i>   | PC            |
| TBA  | Command & Conquer Red Alert 3: Collector's Edition<br><i>[Limited Stock Available. Pre-order for R429.95]</i>                           | PC            |
| TBA  | MySims  | PC            |
| TBA  | MySims Kingdom  | Wii, DS       |





## THIS DAY IN GAMING: OCTOBER



17

(LAN) Organised Chaos (No venue specified)  
(LAN) Vendetta Exhibition Tournament and LAN (Durban)  
[www.langames.co.za](http://www.langames.co.za)

25

(2005) Civilization IV is released for PC. Sid Meier's still got it in him after all those years



18

(LAN) Mayhem LAN (Boksburg)  
[www.langames.co.za](http://www.langames.co.za)

26

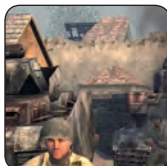
3

(LAN) rAge 2008 (Johannesburg)  
(LAN) MPLD October 2008 (Pretoria)  
[www.langames.co.za](http://www.langames.co.za)

+ rAge 2008 begins!

11

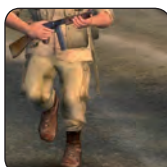
(LAN) Digital Anarchy (Pretoria)  
[www.langames.co.za](http://www.langames.co.za)



4

12

(LAN) FRAG LAN (Durban)  
[www.langames.co.za](http://www.langames.co.za)



13

(1982) The ultra-dodgy Custer's Revenge is released on Atari 2600; the world still hasn't gotten over it.

21

29

(2003) Infinity Ward releases Call of Duty; war never looked this good.

6

(1991) Sonic hits the road for the first time when SEGA releases the Game Gear in Japan.

14

22

(2001) GTA III is released on the PS2. Sandbox crime enters the third dimension

30

(1998) Grim Fandango is released by LucasArts. It was Tim Schafer's last game before Psychonauts.

7

15

(1992) SEGA releases Night Trap on Mega-CD; it's weird and creepy and cost \$1.5 million to produce.



31

(1996) Command and Conquer: Red Alert is released; it's currently available for free download.

8



24

(LAN) The Merriment LAN - Meyerspark (Pretoria)  
[www.langames.co.za](http://www.langames.co.za)

## CAPTION OF THE MONTH

Every month we'll choose a boring, odd or peculiar screenshot from any random game and write a bad caption for it. Your job is to come up with a better caption. The winner will get a free game from Vivendi Universal Games. Send your captions to [ed@nag.co.za](mailto:ed@nag.co.za) with the subject line [October Caption].

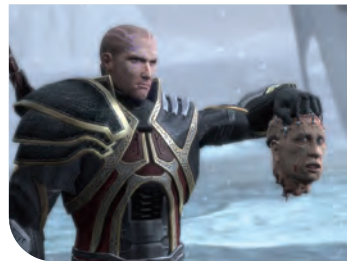


## OCTOBER CONTEST

## NAG'S LAME ATTEMPT:

"Go ahead. Make fun of the fact that I'm wearing a skirt. I dare you."

vivendi  
GAMES



## SEPTEMBER WINNER

Jim had been hard at work plucking turkeys when he realized this was not one...

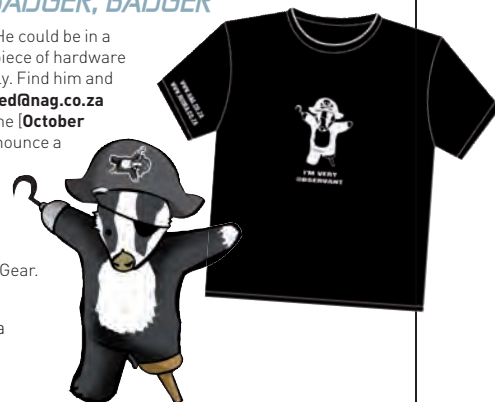
TheOne BladeKill  
(Yes, that's his real name... his parents wanted a Klingon)

**RULES:** (1) If you don't use the correct subject line, your mail will be automatically filtered by our spam software and deleted. (2) If you think sending in 20 captions for the same screenshot is how you want to play the system, then put them all in the same mail or we'll keep the top one and delete the rest. You probably won't win anyway because you can't follow simple instructions. And people who can't follow simple instructions don't deserve to win things. (3) Obey all posted speed limits. (4) Never run with scissors. (5) There is no spoon. (6) Don't tell me what I can't do!

## BADGER, BADGER, BADGER

Find the Badger! He could be in a screenshot, on a piece of hardware or anywhere, really. Find him and send an e-mail to [ed@nag.co.za](mailto:ed@nag.co.za) with the subject line [October Badger]. We'll announce a random winner next month and that person will win a limited-edition Badger T-shirt from Gamer Gear.

[www.rudra.co.za](http://www.rudra.co.za)



## LAST MONTH'S WINNER

Marthinus Smuts, p80



ONLY R517.46



ONLY R299.95



ONLY R517.46

Price and release date subject to change.

kalahari.net  
PC | Wii | PS3 | XBOX 360



## Miktar's Meanderings



by Miktar Dracon

# Sea of Ecclesia

**THESE THINGS ARE GETTING** harder to write. Seriously, I spent an entire month fussing and fretting over my column – what I should write, what it's good for. Am I wasting my time with it? Does anyone really care? Do columns actually matter? I chased my mental tail so much that I have to sit sideways when I type. It used to be easier. The words, upon a time, came easier than Yahtzee\* reviewing a game from one of the many genres he doesn't enjoy: hard and fast.

As the years progress, the need to write something new, something fresh, something interesting, becomes more difficult. It feels as if the longer you remain in this gig, the harder it becomes to pen original, interesting statements or ideas on the subject matter. After all, these days everyone has a gaming blog, everyone has something to say about gaming, and everyone adds his or her voice to the cacophony and din that represent videogames. What's one more educated guess, opinion or angle?

This isn't about lamenting original thought, but rather how it feels to realise the self-imposed pressure from trying to always produce content that is different, unique and personal. Professional pride really is a professional pain in the ass. It's because everyone has something to say about gaming (and inevitably does say it), that one starts to ponder the worth of the printed word. Should I give this space up for another one-page review or preview rather, or move aside to let the newer writers air their ideas?

There is a parallel between what a writer can say about a subject and his or her interactions with said subject matter; in this case, videogames. Games simply aren't interesting me all that much lately. This is undoubtedly a seasonal affliction, as I've come to find myself in this position with cyclic happenstance. It's not that I've become jaded towards gaming, Miyamoto forbid, but I've always had eclectic tastes. Sure, the latest shooter, action title, blatant clone cash-in and super-slick sequel are appealing, but I maintain that a gamer cannot subsist on corporate mass-produced products alone.

As such, it becomes difficult to find what for me is the piquant "new and innovative." They certainly do come along, one example being the temporally redefined *Braid* and its capacity to surprise even the most studious type of gamer. The final level in the game is beyond a doubt the first time I've been truly surprised by something in a game in a very, very long time. It's not that *Call of Duty 4* didn't impress or surprise me – it certainly did, and so will *Spore*, *Mirror's Edge* and [insert list of popular upcoming games here].

It is the unexpected I crave. This in no way degrades, in my eyes, the quality of titles that don't do this for me. Good entertainment is good entertainment, but like a carnivore at a salad bar, I'm left oddly unsatisfied.

No doubt, it is obvious to some that I suffer a self-inflicted woe. There is no reason for me to strive for originality. Most readers would be perfectly happy if I simply echoed popular sentiment, affirming what they already know by putting the Miktar seal of approval on it. Sorry, but I simply don't think *DotA* is all that great. Fun modification, sure, but not the be-all-end-all *DotA* heads want it to be. And perhaps that's part of my problem: my lot remains unaligned with the many cliques bubbling around inside the big videogame vat.

Perhaps I should become a fanboy of some sort to defend one small corner of the gaming 'metaverse' from all those who would dare calling it not fun or 'lame sauce'. It would certainly narrow my scope, making things easier. In hindsight, however, I'd rather shoot myself somewhere painful but not life threatening first before devolving into one of the brand-centric masses that worship certain big-name rock-star developers or console producers because Kojima, Jaffee and Blezinski are the only names from game development they actually know.

In a few months, perhaps, these doldrums will pass: something big, overly hyped and super-fun will happen and all such mutterings about being unable to find enough nourishment in an industry mostly supersaturated with McGames will cease. Therefore, in the meantime, my mind is on holiday where it spends a few hours every day in a heated pool, watching the surrounding trees. Perhaps with enough consideration, it might finally decide to once again squeeze out the sweet juice of creativity for me to lap up. **NAG**

### SOME INTERESTING READING:

**Are Game Reviewers Vulnerable To Disruption?** <http://seanmalstrom.wordpress.com/2008/08/23/are-game-reviewers-vulnerable-to-disruption/>

**Is Nintendo Unwittingly Nailing Gaming Print Magazine Coffins Shut?** <http://www.aeropause.com/2008/08/is-nintendo-unwittingly-nailing-gaming-print-mag-coffins-shut/>

\*Yahtzee is a writer and gamer who stars in *The Escapist's Zero Punctuation* video review series. ([www.escapistmagazine.com](http://www.escapistmagazine.com).)

As the years progress, the need to write something new, something fresh, something interesting, becomes more difficult. It feels as if the longer you remain in this gig, the harder it becomes to pen original, interesting statements or ideas on the subject matter.







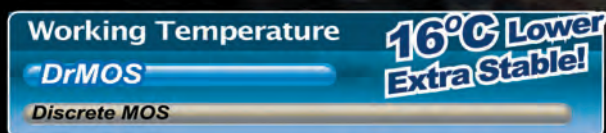
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Dammit



by Megan Hughes

# Desperate Times

**IT WASN'T LONG AGO** that I found myself searching high and low through what is supposed to be the largest shopping mall in the southern hemisphere, trying desperately to find a PC game that I wanted to play and could afford.

It started a few days earlier when I woke up from a vivid dream. It wasn't just your everyday run-of-the-mill subconscious ramblings with random spurts of activity, people and colour dreams, but one in which I'd been gaming. You know things are bad when you're so short on gaming time that your mind reverts to gaming while you sleep. Of course, it's even worse when the game you dreamt about isn't even one you own.

For a long time, I had excuses lined up as to why I had let the dust settle on my small (but meaningful) game collection and why I had avoided purchasing any new titles to add to the shelf. College and all those things that go along with it (such as lectures and textbooks and drinking sprees) had naturally been the first excuse. Following closely behind it was the array of part-time jobs I'd involved myself in, attempting to create a pile of cash specifically for gaming purposes and my small (but meaningful) social life that tended to eat both time and money, leaving me with little of each at the end of each month.

None of that mattered in the slightest as I raced towards Gateway, leaving many a confused and irate driver in my wake. I was going to find a game, dig the cash out of my savings to pay for it, and then turn my cellphone off and let any thoughts of any kind of socialising drain out of my head while I got fully absorbed. That was the plan, anyway.

Now, while I am well aware of the fact that the particular genre that I tend to gravitate towards (adventure games remind me of good books) happens to not be mainstream, and that this generally results in very few games of this genre entering the scene, I still did not expect to walk out of the shopping mall

empty-handed. However, after sifting through every game in every shop that might have any inkling of what a game might be, I left without having purchased a thing.

Things were really bad now. I'd finally given in to the cravings, but now I couldn't seem to get a fix anywhere. But times were desperate and I needed to do something about it fast. It was time to whip out the ADSL connection and the credit card. I was going Internet shopping.

Several Websites and a few thorough browses later and I'd found exactly the purchase I needed to satisfy the urge to game. All I needed to do now was to click 'Add to Cart' (which I did) for the game to be added to my cart. And if I just clicked 'Proceed to Checkout' (which I did), I would be transported magically to the checkout page where, if I just clicked 'Add New Card' and entered my details (which I did), I would be able to click on the big blue button tempting me to 'Buy Now!' Which, of course, I did.

And that, ladies and gentlemen, was that. In seven to ten working days (or less, as it turned out), I would have my purchase delivered directly to my door. Although I must admit that I'll miss the whole experience that goes along with finding games at my leisure as I walk through the aisles of games in stores, I'd much prefer to actually get what I want. I've finally, and definitely, joined the hordes of Internet shoppers when it comes to gaming.

But enough about that, I have some gaming to do... **NAG**



Several Websites and a few thorough browses later and I'd found exactly the purchase I needed to satisfy the urge to game.





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by Walt Pretorius

# Yapping by the mountain

**THIS ISN'T SOMETHING NEW.** This isn't something I haven't spoken about before. In fact, I have spoken about this until my face turned a particularly nice shade of cerulean blue. However, whenever I spoke about it before, it had to do with what has been happening overseas. Now, though, it's happening here, and my outrage is incredible.

See, recently - I am sure all of you recall - one student in Krugersdorp killed another with a sword - a violent, terrible act that shook the nation. And the devil made him do it. Or, wait a minute, was it Slipknot? One of the two, anyway.

In the wake of this, South Africa has a new group of people asking for the banning of violent music and videogames. This group, called the Family Policy Institute, is a Cape Town-based watchdog group that opposes... well, everything, really. They have asked government to remove this "offensive material" from shelves, not because there is any evidence that this obviously disturbed, bullied and mentally ill young man was actually influenced by any band, but because he might have been. In a statement, a spokesperson of the FPI said that, "there was no guarantee that removing violent music and games would prevent violent behaviour, but that it would provide added peace of mind for families."

And here I was defending our forward-thinking constitution. Here I was thinking that our society was able to make choices, and was able to determine what we could be exposed to on a personal level. Here I was thinking that we were mature enough to not be over-governed. I guess I was wrong.

The following list of values is lifted directly from the FPI site:

- A Representative Democracy
- Limited Government
- Religious Freedoms
- The Sanctity of Life from Conception to Natural Death
- The Preservation of Traditional Marriage and the Family as cornerstones of a healthy and prosperous society
- A Free, Open and Robust Market Economy
- An Independent Judiciary that guarantees the Rule of Law

- A Free Press
- Development of an Informed and Active Citizenry

Hang on a minute... point number two: a limited government. Okay, limited as long as they tell us what we may experience as entertainment. Okay. That makes a hell of a lot of sense. Point three is interesting as well, seeing as how the same site states that, "it will endeavour as its main priority to encourage and equip citizens representing the Christian community in South Africa to actively participate in the political and public policy arena through education, information and inspiration, via print and electronic communications." So, religious freedom as long as you're a Christian, right?

Here's my suggestion to this organisation: don't call for the banning of violent entertainment, because not everyone who is exposed to it becomes violent. In fact, if there even is a correlation between the mass media and mass murder, it's a small one at best. Calling for the banning of these forms of entertainment will result in a rise in unemployment too, because many companies will be out of business. Rather, I suggest that the FPI should call for parents to assume some responsibility for their offspring and involve themselves in the lives of their little critters. Then, maybe violent-entertainment exposure will be controlled. Don't call for an end of violent entertainment, but rather an end to irresponsible, absenteeism parenting techniques. The family unit, the cornerstone of society and one of the things that the FPI supports, is dissolving, not because of mass media, but rather because parents just aren't around anymore, and don't take enough interest in what their children are doing.

But above all, I want the FPI to know that it has no right to tell me that I may not experience the kind of entertainment I choose. I am not a child. I like violent videogames. I am mature enough to know the difference between reality and fantasy. And I have the right to choose. **NAG**

The FPI Website can be found at <http://www.familypolicyinstitute.org/about.php>.



Here's my suggestion to this organisation: don't call for the banning of violent entertainment, because not everyone who is exposed to it becomes violent.





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# Uncovered!

The secret game projects they don't want you to know about



**THEY SAY THE FUTURE** is convergence. They say resistance is futile. We say, "Please don't arrest us officer. We're going through this trash can because we're looking for documents that prove game developers are working on secret projects that meld together popular ideas in an attempt to cash in on the trends" You may have noticed it too: rising development costs have publishers preparing for collaborative projects in order to keep costs down on the big franchises. Therefore, we set out to do a little digging, sleuthing and general misdemeanour lawbreaking to bring you the scoop on nothing but facts. To make this exclusive feature possible, we donned our special ops gears and travelled to the US, England, Paris and Trinidad to peer in through windows and see what we could see.

## CALL OF DUTY: VIETNAM

While squatting outside Infinity Ward's boardroom with a tin can held against the door, we overheard Grant Collier confess, "Look, it's probably wrong to have a favourite war, but if I had to choose one, I'd go with Vietnam." He went on to cite the "Huey Choppers, the Green Berets, the M-14 assault rifle, and everything spinning out in a steamy jungle celebration of guts and glory to the tune of Wagner's *Ride of the Valkyries*" as motivation, and really, we can totally get behind that. If you're going to be responsible for the systematic eradication

of an entire nation based on a flimsy political pretext - and fail - you might as well do it in style. And Vietnam had style in buckets.

So, Infinity Ward sat its development staff down in front of compulsory screenings of *Apocalypse Now* and *Platoon*, while drawing up storyboards involving all sorts of genocide-flavoured, fun-like, claustrophobic close-quarters guerrilla stabs-in-the-back, "MAO! MAO!" Russian roulette in a partially submerged bamboo cage, at least one super slow-motion sequence with a deranged suicidal Vietnamese paramilitary and a machete, and a *Guitar Hero* mini-game featuring Creedence Clearwater Revival's *Fortunate Son* played against a backdrop of burning rice paddies and weeping Vietcong children. Deep stuff.

## SIMCITY 5: GALACTIC COLONIES

Doubtlessly inspired by the galactic expansion portion of his much-publicised, soon-to-be-mega-smash-hit *Spore*, Will Wright is secretly busy with a new game during his lunch breaks. We put Rohypnol in his sandwich and stole his diary to bring you this exclusive glimpse of the latest *SimCity* title. We also stole a kiss, because we think Will Wright is awesome and we just love the *Spore* Creature Creator. [Huh? Ed.]

Anyway, "Galactic Colonies" will give players an entire planet to terraform and rezone for human habitation and commerce,





with a feature set of bio-domes, gravity generators, and deathmatch arenas for genetically re-engineered miners. Manage interstellar traffic jams, full-scale alien invasions, and a rapidly escalating planetary budget, while maintaining a positive Galactic Ambassador rating and putting out fires in the industrial zone. New to the series are the Magic Mass-transit Tool, which automatically creates an entire bus, rail, or subway system that citizens will actually use, as well as the Magic Fix-it Tool, which instantly repairs broken water and electricity infrastructures that you'd never be able to actually find anyway. While unconscious, we also whispered into Wright's tender ear, "Sim Tower, please."

### BATTLEFIELD 1342

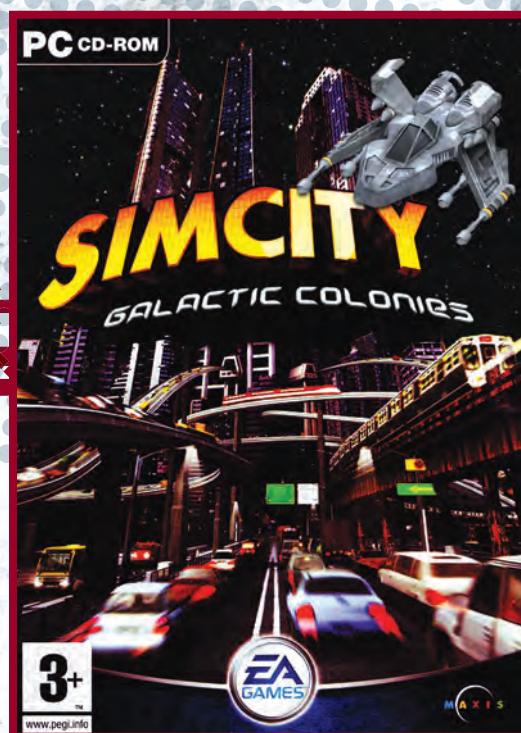
Everyone is getting a bit bored with the FPS, actually. Well, guns. So how about charging people with a 14-foot pike instead? Hiding under the smorgasbord buffet at DICE HQ in Stockholm, our spies discovered that when he's not stuffing his gob with dill herring and *knäckerbröd*, CEO Patrick Söderlund is heading up a medieval massacre set against the backdrop of Pope Clement VI's succession, the widespread devastation of the Black Death, and the fall of the Byzantine Empire, mostly featuring a lot of drafted peasants slopping around in mud and hitting each other to death with sharpened broomsticks. It's all about

making war an accessible, hands-on experience with lots of bloody guts and stuff. Just like the real thing. With its all-new proprietary Bubo Engine, DICE is looking at accurately recreating the experience of ignominious death on the medieval battlefield, including the realistic animation of characters suffering beheading, disembowelling, and being stabbed in the face with a pitchfork. A comprehensive online ranking system will see players rising from lowly farmers to squires, knights, and finally the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, commanding legions of your own, as well as a magic volcano you can summon twice a day.

### BURNOUT: CARMAGEDDON

*Burnout* is awesome. There's no doubt about this, but every time we're sliding around corners in Paradise City at 200km/h only to slam face-first into a bus and crack open another barrel of 'Signature Criterion Crash Effects', we have to ask ourselves, "Where are the giblets, man?" Criterion must have asked themselves the same question, because the next *Burnout* is getting the one thing the series has always lacked: unadulterated vehicular homicide. And it's about time, we say.

A special source at Electronic Arts revealed to us that EA upper-management suddenly noticed it had bought the *Carmageddon* licence a few years back





(when Stainless Games, SCi and Interplay flew into the Bermuda Triangle) and then shelved it next to *Syndicate* and *Dungeon Keeper* on the shelf for 'Projects that will make us money, but we need to wait until people are desperate enough to accept whatever crap we put out'.

Being the cunning corporation that it is, EA management realised there is only one team that could deliver on the licence. While the project is still only in the pre-production planning phase, Criterion are allegedly giddy to be working on their own rendition of the original "Racing game for the chemically imbalanced" and already hours have been spent on the voice and graphics files for the Cunning Stunt Bonus.

### KRYSIS KART

Everyone knows Crytek is no longer PC-exclusive developers, citing the mass pirating of *Crysis* as the main reason they're giving the finger to all those PC gamers who supported them and loved them because they didn't give in to the evils of the console beast. What you may not know is that Crytek has secretly been working on a pet project that may one day be developed into a full game. To unwind from the stressful demands of producing the finest, crispest DirectX 10 visuals this side of a pre-rendered cut-scene, the development team has been fiddling with an internal title exclusively for LAN play, creatively dubbed "Krysis Kart," according to the janitor.

Shaderd 150cc 'nano-shell' go-karts race through the Korean demilitarised zone and players can adjust the nano-shell canvas that surrounds the kart to adjust racing abilities on the fly. Some of the gruff announcer voice samples leaked onto

the Internet exclaims, "Maximum grip, maximum speed, maximum armour, stealth and maximum drift." The abilities allow for a more varied racing dynamic without resorting to heat-seeking turtle shells, although balance issues may be inherent in a game where you can use chickens ambling about the underbrush as projectile weapons.

### GEARS OF WAR ON FAT: UNREAL FIT

It's a stereotype that traditional, hardcore gamers are chair potatoes who only get a good workout with their WASD and right-mouse clicker fingers. It's not that gamers are lazy... they just need health and lifestyle to coincide. That's why Cliffy B is about to tell everyone to "Get the videogame body you always wanted" with "Unreal Fit." We've become aware of secret talks within Microsoft to try to jump on the bandwagon with regards to the surging popularity of peripheral-based fitness titles. Microsoft executives are toying with the idea of their own balance-board peripheral for the 360, dubbed the "Battle Board." Unlike the Wii Fit board, the Battle Board manufacturer specifications we stole from some guy detail a much more interactive experience, combining balance, rumble for tactical feedback, and a salad-grenade launcher.

To help make the idea of a fitness-centric game appealing to hardcore gamers, Microsoft is allegedly enlisting the help of Epic and their *Gears of War* franchise. The "Coleslaw Train" will be your personal digital trainer to lead you through a variety of game types to exercise your FPS flab. One planned mode involves locusts running up and trying to chainsaw you - to dodge will require leaning in





various directions on the Battle Board.

We have it on good authority (from Cliffy B's mom who makes delicious cookies) that the entire team at Epic is committed to this idea, especially since they all suck at *Gears of War* multiplayer anyway.

### RAINBOW SIX: DISNEYLAND

Let's face it. PC gamers are getting older. They're getting little *Doom* Marines of their own, and the family that frags together, stays together. Developers know this. Therefore, it's no surprise that the next Tom Clancy title will take us to the Magic Kingdom. Not much has been revealed so far (and we're not allowed to water-board anyone), aside from sketchy details gleaned from disposed napkins on a proposed multiplayer mode dubbed "Presidential Holiday."

A team-based mode for twelve players or more, "Presidential Holiday" involves one team taking control of the President of the United States, his wife and children, and then actually riding popular Disneyland rides such as Space Mountain and the Matterhorn rollercoaster. Team two controls the counter-terrorist units and have to protect "The Family" from terrorists who will use the secret underground access tunnels to plant bombs on the rides. Both sides can do covert insertions by using mascot suits and silencers for surreptitious battles so as not to disrupt the park.

It seems the team is also toying with the idea of kid-friendly multiplayer modes that involve bonus points for handing out balloons, or weapons being replaced with suction-cup guns.

### SITAR HERO

*Guitar Hero* is, beyond a doubt, a runaway

success that not only jumped the tracks, but also ploughed into the orphanage while carrying a cargo load of exploding puppies. Ever since Activision bought the *Guitar Hero* rights, they've been licensing and punting the franchise further than even Nintendo could dream to do with their rotund plumber. However, the original developer of *Guitar Hero*, Harmonix, has managed to surpass even Activision's attempt to milk the bovine. Sure, *Guitar Hero* has now enlisted the help of extraterrestrials (Aerosmith), but Harmonix has created "Rock Band Japan." Specialised, localised and dressed up for the Japanese conventions in conjunction with Synesthesia developer Q Entertainment, "Rock Band Japan" features J-Pop bands, new graphics and every conceivable angle to make the otaku scream. To retaliate, Activision plans to invade one of the largest untapped gaming territories in history with a calculated brand lane-change. India, here comes "Sitar Hero!"

We've been in contact with several manufacturers in India and gained key insight into what Activision is planning next for their (soon-to-be-holy) cash cow. Same framework and same game as *Guitar Hero*, but "Sitar Hero" is designed to pluck the Indian cultural string and will even include the greatest Bollywood heroes running in blissful rapture across several temperature zones as selectable characters. Activision has been working closely with Red Octane India to produce the new sitar peripheral, which will include four *Kunti* knobs, a *Baj Tar Ki Kunti* knob, five *Parda* frets and a *Bada Ghoraj* strum. Either that, or Activision is planning to release a bonsai-cultivating battle MMO. We're not sure and we're not paying our translators that much. **NAG**

**Disclaimer:** All names, places and events are purely coincidental. And by "coincidental," we mean "outrageous lies, ROFL."







### EVIL GENIUS 2

It had everything: style, substance and a truckload of *Dungeon Keeper*-inspired goodness. Why did it not do well? We're not sure, but we'll blame everyone in South Korea (when they shun a game, that game somehow doesn't do well anywhere else in the world). No, we just made that up.

### THE MOVIES 2

Simply one of the best management games since *Theme Park*, and it was ignored by everyone. Or so we think, because there is no other way to explain why there wasn't a second expansion pack adding animal stars. What's that Lassie? Peter Molyneux is too busy flapping over *Fable 2* to give us *The Movies 2*?

### METALCALYPSE: THE GAME

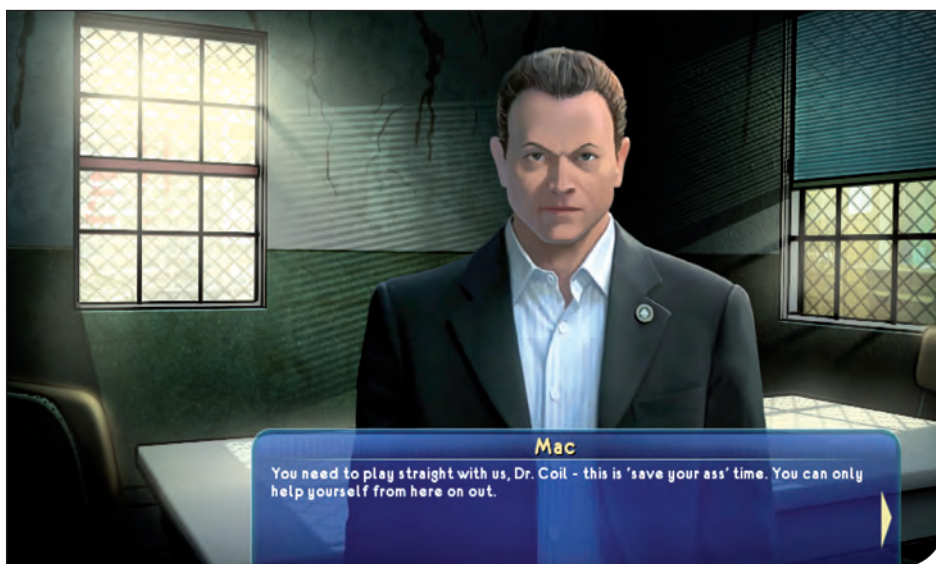
No other show has ever been this 'metal'. No other game will ever be as metal as the *Metalocalypse* game. We're not sure what type of game it should be, but as long as it has Shwisgaar, Toki, William, Pickles and Nathan in it, we'd buy it. If we didn't, we'd not be true *Metalocalypse* fans willing to die for metal. METAL!

### DRAGONFORCE: THE GAME

Just imagine it: a high-resolution 2D fighter (like *Guilty Gear X*), but with tons of fantasy fighters (like orcs, elves and dwarves) and DragonForce songs playing in the background. The final boss-character could be a huge dragon playing super-fast 'pop-metal' on a guitar made of gold.

### TENGEN TOPPA GURREN LAGANN USB FLASH DISK

Have you seen the series? No? Well, anyway, they have this super-sweet USB stick fashioned to look like the main protagonist's drill-bit thingy. You can see it at <http://www.quadelements.com/home/gurrenlagann.html>. How awesome is that? Our drill is the drill that will pierce the heavens!



## CSI: NEW YORK

Developer→Ubisoft | Publisher→Ubisoft | Genre→Adventure/Puzzle | Release Date→December 2008

**I**T'S BEEN OVER A year since the last CSI game. Last year's *Hard Evidence* proved to be an acceptable, competent game, but failed to achieve impressive sales figures. Ubisoft has been paying attention. Taking a step back and re-evaluating the situation - perhaps applying a dash of Luminol to be sure - Ubisoft is now preparing to relaunch the *CSI* series with a fresh image and an as-yet unvisited wing of the popular TV series, *CSI: New York*.

If you've been following the series, your sleuthing skills are no doubt top notch, and you may have noticed the graphical facelift present in the screenshots. This new, graphic novel-inspired look could be the key to breathing new life into a series going stale, while retaining the grit and atmosphere of the series on which the game is based. Of course, an ideal way to add to the player's immersion would be to let them play as the TV series characters themselves, which will be possible in *CSI: NY* for the

very first time. Players will be able to hit the streets of the Big Apple as either Detective Mac Taylor or Stella Bonasera, investigating and (hopefully) solving the five crimes present in the game.

As well as the interface overhaul, the game's accessibility is on the rise with a number of mini-games the player must complete as part of their investigations. Players will have to break codes, program facial recognition software and triangulate gunfire origins from the scene of the crime, and will, for the first time, engage in interactive interrogations of suspects. We're holding thumbs that there's a 'slap suspect around with a phone book' option - this is NY after all.

Due to hit the shelves in time for the Christmas frenzy, *CSI: NY* looks as if it could be the rebirth the series needs. Let's just hope it turns out to be a little more than merely average. **NAG**

Geoff Burrows

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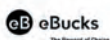
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# HALO WARS

**NOT CONTENT WITH THE** unprecedented success of the *Halo* series, Microsoft and Ensemble Studios are taking a crack at expanding the franchise in a different and unpredictable direction – the RTS. *Halo Wars* is a bird's-eye view of the Halo universe and is built from scratch exclusively for the Xbox 360. The game's timeline is set about 20 years before the first *Halo* game (*Halo: Combat Evolved*) and will see players taking control of the crew and vehicles of a UNSC ship, the CFV-88 Spirit of Fire. The story will touch on the discovery of a Forerunner artefact and the initial crossing of swords with the Covenant. Guiding players through the action is Serina, the ship's artificial intelligence. At the recent Games Convention in Leipzig, NAG managed to nab a hands-on test slot for *Halo Wars* (headed by Graeme Devine,

lead designer); and after a brief introduction and a short tutorial session, took the fight to the Covenant.

## RULE OF EIGHT

In a guided multiplayer game, everyone began with a base, which was restricted to a central command hub with six build slots and four defence slots. From here, pushing a button and dialling in an order for a structure from a circle menu was all that was required to begin building base components. To start, we had to build a supply pad, barracks and reactor. According to the creators, the control interface was developed first and then the game was built around it. It has to be said that during our short session, the control system was quick, efficient and easy to use. So no problems there... It's based on a rule of eight: i.e. no

## PEDIGREE

Ensemble Studios is handling the development of *Halo Wars*. These are the same people who did *Age of Empires*, all its sequels and expansions, and *Age of Mythology* plus its expansion. They certainly know their unit formations when it comes to strategy on the PC. It remains to be seen how their wealth of experience translates into the tricky RTS console environment.



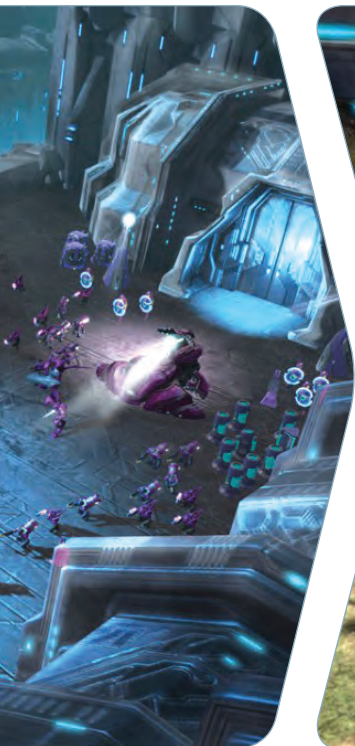
HANDS ON



TESTED

more than eight options are available in any circle menu in the game, and this limits the time it takes to issue commands and makes for a rather snappy way to direct the action with a console controller. After the barracks went up and a few soldiers were trained, it was time for some vehicles (Warthogs and Scorpion tanks), special units (Spartans) and a few flying units. Once the army was assembled, we headed off to the Covenant base. After moving across the map and destroying all the Covenant units, it was time to pound the base, which brought into play the UNSC super weapon – the Spirit of Fire (orbiting above). A few quick menu selections later and we were raining death from above, and in a bright flash the Covenant base was gone. The whole experience was over in about fifteen minutes, suggesting that the multiplayer in





## NEW-ORDER RTS

It seems that there are more than a few developers who want to crack real-time strategy on the current-generation consoles (PS3 and Xbox 360). It's become something of a Holy Grail, with the control interface being the critical make-or-break factor. One has opted for voice commands; another, radial menus; and some have even tried to reinvent the wheel. There seems to be two different camps of thinking: hardcore players and casual players. The hardcore orientated are focussing on speed (*Stormrise*), while others (*Halo Wars* and *EndWar*) are looking more at simplicity. Then there's the strong *Command & Conquer* franchise with products already in the market. The winners of this cart-and-donkey race will ultimately be decided by the gamers, who will soon be spoilt for choice. The question of course remains: will the popular franchises nudge out the new ideas purely based on their legacy, or will the new contenders build enough of a following with their control systems and take first prize? Unfortunately for everyone else, the Halo part of *Halo Wars* might end up winning, based not on how the game plays, but purely on the sheer weight of the fan base and the tantalising promise that it'll fill in a few blanks and add more substance to the Halo universe.



*Halo Wars* is going to be intense.

As mentioned, controlling the action is very straightforward. Pressing the A button once selects a unit; double pressing it selects all units of the same type across the map; and then holding it in creates a 'paint brush' area of effect where you can 'paint' the units you'd like to issue commands to. Combat is as simple as selecting a unit or units and attacking the enemy. There are two types of attack and all of the units in the game can be improved by adding and upgrading structures back at the base (or bases if you've captured another one or two). As an example, the Spartans' secondary attack is seizing enemy vehicles, and this is done by jumping on them and pounding away until the driver can be ejected from the cockpit. In terms of upgrading units, the first upgrade path for soldiers is an extra

soldier for the squad, the next adds rocket launchers and finally you'll be able to create medics – it's like this for all the units in the game, but at the expense of resources, base slots and time. There's also no resource management, as additional income is generated by simply building more supply pads, and considering that each base is limited to six construction sites, it pays to capture enemy bases.

The game looks stunning, and has a very detailed and colourful feel to it – a little like *Red Alert 3*. If you're a *Halo* fan, it's a lot of fun commanding tiny Warthogs and Spartans around the map. The developers have the look and feel spot on. So, that's *Halo Wars'* multiplayer in a nutshell.

From the outset, *Halo Wars* has always sounded like a quick buck-making exercise, but then a *Halo* RTS was

inevitable considering all the cool toys in the Halo universe. However, there are some issues that need to be highlighted: there're only two factions (UNSC and Covenant) in the game. Where's the Flood? Equally limiting, the only faction playable in the single-player campaign will be the UNSC. The game dynamic is also a little simplistic, which might chase away more serious players. Another thing to consider is that this game is going to be a lot of fun against other players, so bear in mind that you'll need a LIVE account and some bandwidth to spare. Overall, this is looking like one for the fans (all fifty million of them), but that said, the game isn't all that bad and anything that adds to the Halo universe isn't something you can ignore. **NAG**

**Michael James**





## NEED FOR SPEED: UNDERCOVER

**T**HERE HAVE BEEN VERY few games to achieve the success of Electronic Arts' *Need for Speed* series. For several years now, the series has thrilled racing fans with excellent arcade-racing action. The original game, called *The Need for Speed*, was released in 1994, bringing with it a new approach to racing titles.

Like any series, *Need for Speed* has seen different incarnations and evolutionary tracks throughout its impressive run. The biggest change – and indicator of things to come – was the introduction of aggressive police vehicles that would chase down the player's car. This happened in *Need for Speed III: Hot Pursuit*, which hit shelves in 1998. The formula was fresh and the multiplayer element, which allowed players to chase each other, was unique, and resulted in the game being something of a hit on the local (and then very new) LAN scene.

The next big step for the *Need for Speed* series was to go 'underground'. *Underground* all but replaced the *Need for Speed* model, and saw the light of day around a year after the *Hot Pursuit* concept was further refined in *Hot Pursuit 2*.

Released in 2003, *Need for Speed: Underground* brought a whole new concept to the series, reinforcing the illegality of the player's actions, and allowing the player to explore so-called tuner culture to a greater degree than ever before.

The formula stuck, with every subsequent title being a product of the *Underground* evolution. 2005 saw a further reinforcement of the 'you're being a bad boy' principle, with the introduction of *Most Wanted*, a game that dragged street racing out of the night and into the stark light of day. New techniques and tricks, like the introduction of a bullet-time concept, made for interesting new game dynamics, and the

subsequent title, *Carbon* (released in 2006) took things even further, with frantic cliff-side boss-challenges thrown into the mix.

The following year, 2007, brought the street-racing concept to a screeching halt. *ProStreet* was released, and while it still followed tuner culture and allowed players a high degree of vehicle customisation, the races were moved to tracks. The idea wasn't particularly well received, and the story behind the game (something which had grown significantly in importance since the release of the original *Underground* title) took a back seat. The game underperformed, and forced EA to reinvestigate their strategy.

Set for release this year, the new *Need for Speed* title, subtitled *Undercover*, takes the game back to the open-world, illegal-racing action. The story is being brought back to the fore as well, with the player taking the part of a character vital to the plot.





There are a few concepts that are exciting about *Need for Speed: Undercover*. The first is the addition of highway racing. These high-speed events are new to the series, and allow the player to participate in truly break-neck speed tussles. To augment these races (and presumably others) EA has included a "heroic driving" system in the game. This will allow the player to pull off amazing stunts at high speeds, although exact details on how it will work were a little sparse at the time of going to print.

The action will be augmented by a deep story, starring actress Maggie Q (*Die Hard 4.0*). Details of the story have also been vague, although the subtitle implies that the player takes the part of an undercover operative in a street-racing setup. Speaking of cops, they'll be back with a vengeance in *Undercover*, complete with an improved AI and physics. Word also has it that the cops are pretty nasty, although the aggression of

the fuzz in *Most Wanted* will be hard to top.

Supported by cutting-edge graphics, the game will feature the customisation that has become something of a *Need for Speed* trademark. Although the series has never been accused of being overly realistic (in fact, we've heard more than a few nuts-and-bolts racing fans call it little more than an arcade racer), the renewed damage model, which showed great promise in *ProStreet*, will make cars look really bad after mishaps. Although the full vehicle list hasn't been released at the time of going to print, cars you will invariably be trashing on the streets of the fictional Tri-Bay area (which, by the way, will feature around 80 miles of roads) include the Audi R8, BMW M6 and Lexus IS-F.

EA is taking a step back - which is coincidentally also a step in the right direction for this franchise - with *Undercover*, moving the action back to the wrong side of illicit and bringing

back the aggressive law enforcers that have been an occasionally recurring theme in the series for the last ten years. *Need for Speed: Undercover* looks very promising, and fans are hoping for solid improvements over both *Carbon* and *ProStreet*. These improvements look likely as the racing market competition heats up - EA is determined to keep this racing series in pole position.

And just in case you're wondering, EA CEO John Riccitiello has let slip that there will be more driving action coming in the future. A new title, codenamed *Need for Speed XIII*, is apparently already in development, and will hopefully be available in 2009.

For now, though, fans of the series are waiting for *Undercover*, in the hope that previous glories and high points will be recaptured. **NAG**

Walt Pretorius





# DEAD SPACE

**IT WAS JUST ANOTHER** day on the job for Isaac Clarke, Engineer First Class, Concordance Extraction Corporation. According to his morning brief, the company had received a distress signal from one of their 'cracker class' planet-eating mining frigates, the USG Ishimura, and subsequently lost all contact with the errant vessel. Assuming simple mechanical failure of some kind<sup>1</sup>, the CEC handed wrenches and packed lunches to Clarke and two of his colleagues, and shuttled them off to fix stuff. Which turns out to be something of a mistake, as the ship is overrun by a pack of marauding alien monsters called Necromorphs, who – despite the remarkable similarity in both general temperament and apparent strategic mandate to totally eviscerate absolutely everything with dead-eyed, merciless abandon – are not in any way related to the *Alien* series' Xenomorphs. We're also sure there's no insidious and outrageously self-interested corporate scheming behind the otherwise inexplicable recent arrival of an enigmatic artefact

brought aboard the Ishimura either, despite it having wreaked terrible madness among the miners who excavated it in the colonies in the first place.

Anyway, Clarke is now faced with the rather grim prospect of negotiating his way through the infested bulkheads of the Ishimura, while fastidiously avoiding some sort of really gross and instantly regrettable death. Just to keep things interesting, the ship's former occupants have been mutated into grotesque, shambling bags of poison and other similarly formidable shapes, while some of its decks have lost pressure, centrifugal force, magnetic flooring or the 'Shu-Glu Gnomes™' (or whatever it is that makes gravity happen in space). We're assuming that Clarke can expect a small bonus and maybe a day off when he gets back to CEC HQ. Once they've divested him of the artefact, anyway. Oh, did we mention that the CEC probably secretly wanted the artefact for their own nefarious purposes? We're just stabbing in the dark here. **NAG**

Tarryn van der Byl

## IT'S BEYOND A GAME

To generate pre-release hype, Electronic Arts and Image Comics have joined forces to push out a series of comics disclosing the events leading up to the game's gruesome scenarios, penned by veteran graphic novelist, Anthony Johnston. An animated collection of these is available for download from the Xbox LIVE Marketplace, PSN, and a number of gaming Websites. There's also some sort of straight-to-DVD film in the works, dubbed *Dead Space: Downfall*, produced and animated by Film Roman (*The Simpsons*, *King of the Hill*, as well as the recent *Hellboy Animated* features). You can find parts 1-5 on the NAG DVD.





## ACCESS DENIED

Recent reports claim that *Dead Space* has been banned in Germany, China and Japan for its offensive content, because apparently nobody bleeds red over there or something. Subsequent reports, however, have suggested that this alleged ban may be nothing more than an elaborate marketing stunt, as EA's PR drones have refused to confirm or deny the story. In the meantime, everybody is furiously adding it to their 'must-buy' lists, because if it's banned, it must be awesome. Right?

## CUTTING-EDGE TECHNOLOGY

Unlike traditional sci-fi shooter heroes (that guy from *Doom*, that guy from *Unreal*), Isaac Clarke isn't a great burly space marine/prisoner with a pocket arsenal of flak cannons and a gruffly butch disposition. Rather, he's the luckless engineer who drew that morning's worst assignment, and he'll just have to make innovative use of the equipment at hand to get the job done. What happy convenience, therefore, that the besieged decks of the Ishimura are heavily populated with the sort of machinery you're warned against using without a six-month vocational college diploma and a hard hat. If it can pulverise iron ore, imagine what it could do to soft, organic fleshy bits? Speaking of dismemberment (because we were), it's pretty much the only way these Necromorphs will go down. Not only because they're really dedicated and almost unfeasibly durable, mind you, but because developer EA Redwood Shores decided during an early design meeting that rending monsters limb for limb – and then clubbing them to death with their own limbs – would probably be enormous fun. Hurrah for focus groups.

All of the tools Clarke picks up can be modified in the Ishimura's many maintenance holds to maximise their previously unrealised potential, including damage, capacity, and reload specs – like strapping a Gatling gun onto a screwdriver. There are also a few gadgets Clarke can collect and plug into his fancy space suit for cool stuff like telekinesis and a stasis charge that slows everything down for a bit.

Add these to your shiny red toolbox:

## 211-V PLASMA CUTTER

Originally designed to shear chunks of boulders, the Plasma Cutter's ionised gas and plasma beam can be much better employed in producing novelty Necromorph sandwich meat.

## RC-DC REMOTE CONTROL DISC RIPPER

You bring the party with this easy-to-use, readily portable device that shoots radial titanium buzz saws at speeds in excess of 17,000rpm. Keep your thumbs out of the way.

## PFM-100 HYDROGEN TORCH FLAMETHROWER

Textbook standard fire chucker, with a secondary firing mechanism for spitting napalm grenades.

## IM-822 HANDHELD IRON ORE LINE CUTTER

The 211-V Plasma Cutter's big brother likes cutting stuff and long walks through the chunky remains of enemies.

## C99 SUPERCOLLIDER CONTACT BEAM

Part jackhammer, part wrecking ball, and all business. The primary fire mode generates the sort of massive charge that would probably stop even the most expensive digital watch, while its secondary mode projects a rotating energy blast through the ground, damaging anything around it.

## SWS MOTORISED PULSE RIFLE

Okay, there are guns in the game. This is one of them.

<sup>1</sup> Because what else could it possibly be, out in the suffocating silence and largely uncharted recesses of deepest space? Obviously, the CEC Engineering Department boss hasn't seen *Event Horizon*.



PC

360

PS3

Wii

PS2

PSP

DS

MOB

NAG



# DRAGON AGE: ORIGINS

**“WE’RE THRILLED TO BE** returning to BioWare’s fantasy roots, with *Dragon Age: Origins* representing the culmination of over a decade of experience,” said Ray Muzyka, CEO, BioWare, and VP, Electronic Arts. “*Dragon Age: Origins* is a dark, heroic fantasy that doesn’t pull any punches. Our fans are in for the most emotionally intense gaming experience we’ve ever created, and we hope to surprise them with just how dark and gritty it gets!”

So this is what the *Baldur’s Gate* team has been up to since... well, *Baldur’s Gate*. *Dragon Age* is the spiritual successor to *Baldur’s Gate* (one of the most successful role-playing games in the industry) and represents a ‘return to roots’ for BioWare. On the marketing checklist: stunning visuals, emotionally driven narrative, heart-pounding combat, powerful magic, and credible digital actors. BioWare has ample street credentials to make the last one seem believable, but the proof will be in the digital pudding.

*Dragon Age: Origins* uses a new game engine titled Eclipse, which is in stark contrast to BioWare’s sterling use of the Unreal Engine 3 for *Mass Effect*. It has been confirmed that, like *Neverwinter Nights*, the toolset for fan-made content will be included right from the start. Unfortunately, *Dragon Age* will be a single player-only game.

While on the topic of confirmed features, there will be three base classes to choose from: Rogue, Warrior or Wizard. Each class will gain powerful special abilities in the form of spells, talents and skills. The combat falls into the real-time, pause-and-play tactical bucket, akin to *Baldur’s Gate* and *Neverwinter Nights*.

Your character will party with up to three other characters that will respond to your moral choices, something of a BioWare hallmark by now. There is no tracking of alignment as in previous BioWare titles, but the moral choices you make affect not only the story, but also the world around you. You may influence who becomes a King, you will affect nations and races as well as their places in the world. These decisions may make or break your relationships with companion NPC characters. Piss them off

enough and they’ll take off, leaving you to save the world by yourself.

The ‘epic, party-based combat’ has a new scalable combat system, which lets players engage in large-scale battles, queuing up the special abilities and attacks of every party member, before unpause the game to see what happens. Spell combos let you combine spells for unique, emergent effects, while the spells have realistic interactions with the world (for example, you can use a grease spell to set a trap, triggered by a well-placed fireball). You can view the action either from over the shoulder, or from an isometric zoomed angle.

The best-known feature of *Dragon Age* is the Origin Stories. Players will choose and play through a unique prelude scenario that sets the tone for how the player’s character sees the world and how that world treats the character. The choice of Origin will determine not only who they are and where they begin their epic adventure, but also affect the way every adventure plays out. If you decide to be a Dwarf from the noble sect of High Court, your Origin Story will be full of court intrigue and high-stakes political manoeuvring. Choose to be Human from the slums of the city, and expect a rags-to-warrior tale of killing rats until you can take on all who stand in your way.

Thus far, details on the game’s setting and plot are scant, although we do know that the setting will be ‘dark, heroic fantasy’ as opposed to the ‘shiny, high fantasy’ of *Dungeons & Dragons*. The game plays out in a world where an elite society of warriors, known as the Grey Wardens, battle the Blight, an evil infestation that appears to be the side effect of the presence of an arch demon. The story will be epic and contain ‘mature themes’, though the exact nature of the mature themes remains to be seen. (We’re hoping for buckets of blood!) According to BioWare, they have drawn inspiration for the game from ‘realistic’ fantasy fiction by the likes of George R.R. Martin (*A Game of Thrones*) and fantasy paintings by artists such as Frank Frazetta. **NAG**

Miktar Dracon









## AION: THE TOWER OF ETERNITY

**IT WAS ONCE SPECULATED** that the arrival of *World of Warcraft* would all but crush most competition and stunt future development of MMORPGs. However, if anything, since the introduction of *WoW*, the drive to create the next 'big' massively multiplayer online game has accelerated.

The real problem that any new MMO developer has is finding a way to differentiate its MMO from *WoW*, while still hoping to scrape up table scraps from whoever (still) isn't addicted to Blizzard's flagship. South Korean developer NC Soft has made a few attempts to date with PC titles *Lineage* and *Lineage II: The Chaotic Chronicle*. Now NC Soft is setting its sights on a larger target market with *Aion: Tower of Eternity*.

What sets *Aion* apart, according to NC Soft, is that whereas *Lineage II* focussed almost entirely on player vs. player, *Aion* will expand its game with a fusion of large-scale player vs. player and PVE - player vs. enemy. *Aion* will also likely gain some attention from the fact that it runs on the famous - or

perhaps infamous - CryENGINE, used in the first-person shooter, *Far Cry*, which is good news, as one of *Lineage II*'s notable issues was its visual performance when large numbers of players were grouped together. (*Lineage II* ran on the Unreal Engine.)

NC Soft is also trying to load *Aion* with a number of novel touches, including the ability of player flight: characters will be able to fly, starting for durations of one minute before cool down, and the game world will be constructed to offer advantages and hindrances based on one's flight capacity. PvP combat has been moved to zones called the Abyss, in which castles reside that allow for wholesale guild conflicts. Exactly how much of *Lineage* will peek through in *Aion*'s castle-siege play mechanic remains to be seen.

One thing *Aion* does have going for it is its setting. Set in the fictional world of Atreia, *Aion* sets the stage for a three-sided faction war spawned by the near-destruction of the Tower of Eternity: an epic structure that is the literal embodiment of a god named

*Aion*. When the tower was split in two, it resulted in catastrophic damage to the world of Atreia, carving the land into dual realms. In a break from fictive stereotypes, the lower realm of the Elyos enjoys sunlight, while the upper realm of the Asmodians suffers darkness. Each faction believes that it must destroy the other to survive. Throw in the Balaur - an extra-dimensional threat - and the war is on in which each faction must prevent its fragment of the Tower of Eternity from being destroyed. The world of Atreia is described as having a dreamlike quality about it, and this will affect the visual presentation and graphic design as well. (Perceptive gamers will take this as a warning that there's going to be bloom. Lots of bloom.)

NC Soft has emphasized the detail with which *Aion*'s story is crafted, pointing out how it strays from the mould, including avoiding a "light versus dark" scenario where one race is good and the other evil. Atreia's races are said to be complex, with the warring factions being neither good nor evil. There is great





## HAVE IT YOUR WAY

An interesting element of customisation for players who care about their looks will be the ability to craft the graphic model of one item with the stats of another, allowing you to preserve a particular appearance without suffering debilitating play. Additionally, the basic selection of character models can be tweaked further in the same style as Bethesda's *The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion*: height, weight, and tweaking the precise details of facial features.



potential for expanding on the storyline, as several epic events are referred to 'offstage' and waiting to be revealed as Atreia's history and the back-story are developed.

However, is there room for another MMORPG when there are so many upstart titles launching? *Aion* has the aesthetics, but if its game mechanics fail to set it apart, it could be a failure. Moreover, NC Soft's games have traditionally failed to capitalise on their settings, with lots of iconic locations (which served little purpose) and limited depth outside of the socially orientated versus combat. With NC Soft's history of robust player vs. player combat systems, however, *Aion* could at least find a niche for itself among the hardcore.

Hopefully the enhanced emphasis on PvE will result in a more detailed world that offers more to do. Each NC Soft title has been a more refined and expansive game than the previous one. Every developer's breakthrough title is waiting in the wings - they just have to find it. **NAG**

**Miktat Dragon**

## RACIAL EQUITY IN THE WORKPLACE

Currently, *Aion* will only offer two playable character races at the beginning, both of them humanoid. The third major race, the Balaur, exists only as NPCs. Eight character classes will be available at the start, with each class offering advanced class options after level ten. Classes don't break the MMO mould, ranging from jobs like Fighters to Priests. The advanced classes - yet to be revealed - could be a deal breaker for attracting long-term players. It's unknown at this stage if more playable races are planned for long-term development.





## BROTHERS IN ARMS: HELL'S HIGHWAY

**THE GOOD NEWS:** *BIA: HH* plays great and looks astonishing. The bad news: well, there is no bad news really. The game will probably appeal to gamers who like to have some tactical decision-making thrown into their FPSs, while gamers looking for mindless action should probably steer clear. Players once again control Matt Baker, a member of the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (more World War II action here), and it seems as though you'll see many familiar faces throughout Hell's Highway. During most missions, the game places several squads under your control, each with their own uses. MG squads are great for suppressing the enemy and providing cover fire. Assault squads, as their name implies, are useful for taking advantage of flanking opportunities, while Bazooka squads specialise in destroying enemy fortified positions (MG nests and the like) and taking on enemy armour. These were the squads available for control in the preview copy we received, but there will be a greater selection of units to control in the full game. The

game's controls take a bit of getting used to, but once you have the hang of it, you'll be organising your squads quickly and efficiently. The key is to ensure that the enemy is suppressed by one of your squads before sending another squad - or charging in yourself - to flank the enemy. The suppression-o-meter is back, that red ring that floats above enemy squads and slowly turns to grey as you rain fire down on them. The only way to survive in this game is to use teamwork. Moving out into the open without ensuring that the enemy is suppressed often results in a quick death, since a single bullet is enough to take you down. Thankfully, a cover system has been added to the game to help you stay alive out there. The preview copy only had the first chapter of the game available for playing, and it says a lot that I can't wait to play the rest of it when it finally hits store shelves. The game feels very polished and fans of the series will be pleased with what *Hell's Highway* has to offer. **NAG**

Dane Remendes

HANDS ON



TESTED

**YOU'VE GOT CINEMATICS IN MY ACTION... CINEMACTION!**

Certain happenings in *BIA: HH* result in stylish close-ups of the action. It's difficult to explain really, but imagine this: you're pinned down behind a wall of sandbags and an enemy MG is laying down suppressing fire on your position. Cue a well-placed grenade (courtesy of Matt Baker's throwing arm), which lands right behind the MG nest. After a wait that seems like an eternity, the grenade finally does its dirty work, and if you're lucky, the camera will zoom in on the explosion, giving you a close-up view that allows you to watch as the newly amputated bodies of your enemies are thrown into the air. These sequences occur in real time and the only purpose they serve is to give a cinematic feel to the game, which they achieve perfectly.



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It's fun to stay at the Y.M.C....ah screw it

## S.T.A.L.K.E.R.: CLEAR SKY

### S.T.A.L.K.E.R.: SHADOW OF CHERNOBYL

It was one of those games that gamers either loved or hated. More often than not, however, it was a combination of the two (love-hate relationships are tricky). Allowing players to explore a massive, mostly non-linear game world, and then giving them a barely functional PDA to direct them was somewhat annoying, leading to many complaints. Nevertheless, I enjoyed it and spent many, many hours in the wastelands of the Zone.

*Clear Sky* seems as if it's going to be more of the same, with a few improvements thrown in. I'm not going to spoil the story for you, but *Clear Sky* is a prequel to *Shadow of Chernobyl* and it looks as though the game will reveal many of the Zone's secrets that were not detailed in the original title. The game world is still gigantic and even though I spent around 7-8 hours in front of my monitor, I barely scratched the surface

of the starting area! I spent most of that time running around searching for artefacts hidden in anomalies, killing mutants, looting the corpses of slain enemies and hunting for hidden supply caches. As in the first title, there is so much to see and do in *Clear Sky* that this game will definitely keep players busy for a long time. Another returning aspect is the relentless difficulty level. If you walk into an enemy encampment without a plan of attack, you're not going to be leaving unless you're being transported in a body bag. On top of this, the game world is still littered with 'anomalies', radioactive areas and generally nasty things. One of the best improvements in *Clear Sky* is the enhanced PDA. Aside from a more functional map, there are a few additions to the PDA interface. Factions play a much bigger role in this prequel, and the PDA has its own screens devoted to information regarding the factions. Once you've become part of



a faction, you can choose to help increase your faction's strength by attacking, capturing and then defending specific strategic locations around the game world. One of the new screens of the PDA shows the amount of resources your faction has available to them, the number of members currently in your faction, and objectives you need to complete in order to increase these statistics. When you're at war with another faction, their stats are also displayed on the PDA. Another new PDA feature shows each faction and their ranking in the Zone, along with some other details. Managing your inventory is a lot simpler this time around. Another area that seems to have been given a bit of fine-tuning is the graphics. The game looks incredible despite the size of the game world (provided your PC can handle it).

If you loved *Shadow of Chernobyl*, *Clear Sky* will tickle you in all the right places. **NAG**

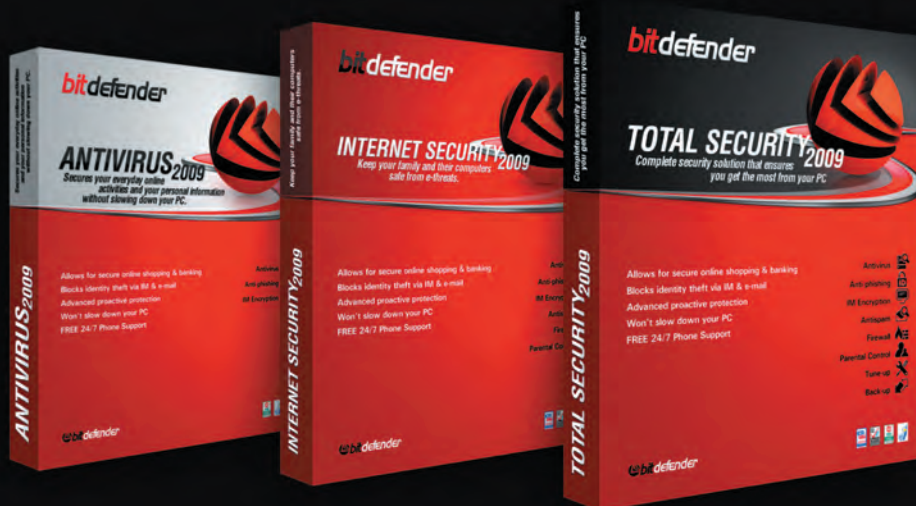
Dane Remendes



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## PURE

**CLIMAX RACING HAS BEEN** very quiet. That's probably because they changed their name to Black Rock Studios. However, since Disney acquired them, we haven't seen anything from the studio who worked on *MotoGP* and *ATV Offroad Fury*. The silence is about to end, though, with the upcoming release of *Pure*.

Black Rock has a bit of racing experience under their belts, and by combining forces with legendary quad bike rider Wes Miller, has managed to create a game that is thoroughly exciting.

Let's face it: there aren't many off-road racing titles available for the Xbox 360, and what there is, isn't great.

*Pure* takes a big step forward in the off-road racing genre, and holds a lot of promise. The game is set in massive, beautifully presented and constructed

levels around the globe. The player will get to select one of a number of riders and quad bikes to make use of on these tracks, and using an effective and easy-to-learn control system will get the player doing impressive tricks with ease in no time at all.

*Pure* will feature a solid physics model, which, while a little over the top at times, will allow the player to take a somewhat realistic approach to racing, whether in single player against pretty sneaky AI opponents, or in multiplayer tussles of up to sixteen players.

The game feels great, with responsive controls and predictable results to actions. Above all, it's fun, with a great impression of speed created as the player speeds around one of the multi-path tracks. The jumps are massive, the tricks are huge (and relatively easy to pull off) and the



racing action is intense.

There are a few very nice little extras to look forward to as well. One of the elements of the game that struck a note with us is the interaction between the chosen rider and the player: performing a great trick results in the rider turning around and giving the player a thumbs up, as if the AI of the character is fully aware that the player is pulling the strings. It's a nice touch.

*Pure* will be released for the PC, PS3 and Xbox 360. Even though it won't be the only PS3 option, it will give titles like the upcoming *MotorStorm: Pacific Rift* a good run for its money, and will definitely fill a gap in the Xbox 360 market.

*Pure* is an exciting title that racing fans will definitely want to check out. **NAG**

Walt Pretorius





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## AS-WHO STUDIOS?

Asobo Studios haven't been around all that long, with the only titles of note under their belt being *Ratatouille* (based on the Pixar movie, in conjunction with Heavy Irony Studios, and not that bad really), *Sitting Ducks* (based on a little-known TV show and quite terrible) and *Garfield 2* (based on the movie - we won't mention how bad it was). Everyone has to start somewhere, we guess. With any luck, *Fuel* will be their true claim to fame (and we won't have to suffer through another *Garfield* game from them).



# FUEL

**F**AMOUS FOR THE BIGGEST racing environment ever, *Fuel* offers up 14,000km<sup>2</sup> of terrain, all seamless and all yours to explore and race on while dodging the not-so-usual chunks of debris from kilometres away thrown up by pesky tornadoes. To a few people, it might sound familiar. In development when Codemasters took over Asobo Studios, *Grand Raid Offroad* was the game you were waiting for. Now, you're actually waiting for *Fuel*.

"*Fuel* is a ground-breaking game. You can do what you want to do, with complete freedom," claims David Dedeine of Asobo Studios quite boldly. "It's the first time in a car-racing game where you can really go where you want."

The promised full freedom aside, the major feature of *Fuel* is its weather system. Alongside the day/night cycle, you also get

strong weather effects such as tornadoes, sandstorms and thunderstorms, all of which change in real time during a race, forcing players to change their planned routes. You'll be driving through the desert alongside fellow racers when suddenly a sandstorm drops visibility to zero, leaving you with the choice of either braving forward blindly or trying to flank out into clear sky so that you can find a way around the kilometre-wide racing hazard.

"The story behind *Fuel* is an alternative to the present. Global warming has really changed the climate, and added a lot of strong climate events, like tornadoes, storms... a bunch of crazy drivers are going for it, into these extreme conditions, to find more extreme racing than ever," elaborates Sebastian Wloch of Asobo Studios.

Thematically it's all very *Mad Max* inspired:

racers in enhanced dune buggies, trucks and quads, with face-covering masks to stop the evil dust from invading their lungs. *Fuel*'s multiplayer component will include 16-player racing in "grungy home-tuned vehicles" across "the tsunami-wrecked Pacific Coast, the Nevada wastelands, including the Grand Canyon, up treacherous snow-capped mountains, and through thick forests, arid deserts, abandoned lakeside resorts and much more."

Ambitious, and who knows how the free-roaming element will actually be implemented - but it sounds good and Codemasters seem to have an eye for racing lately. Already, *Fuel* shows the expected level of polish we've grown accustomed to from Codemasters, even if *Fuel* isn't being developed in-house. **NAG**

**Miktar Dracon**





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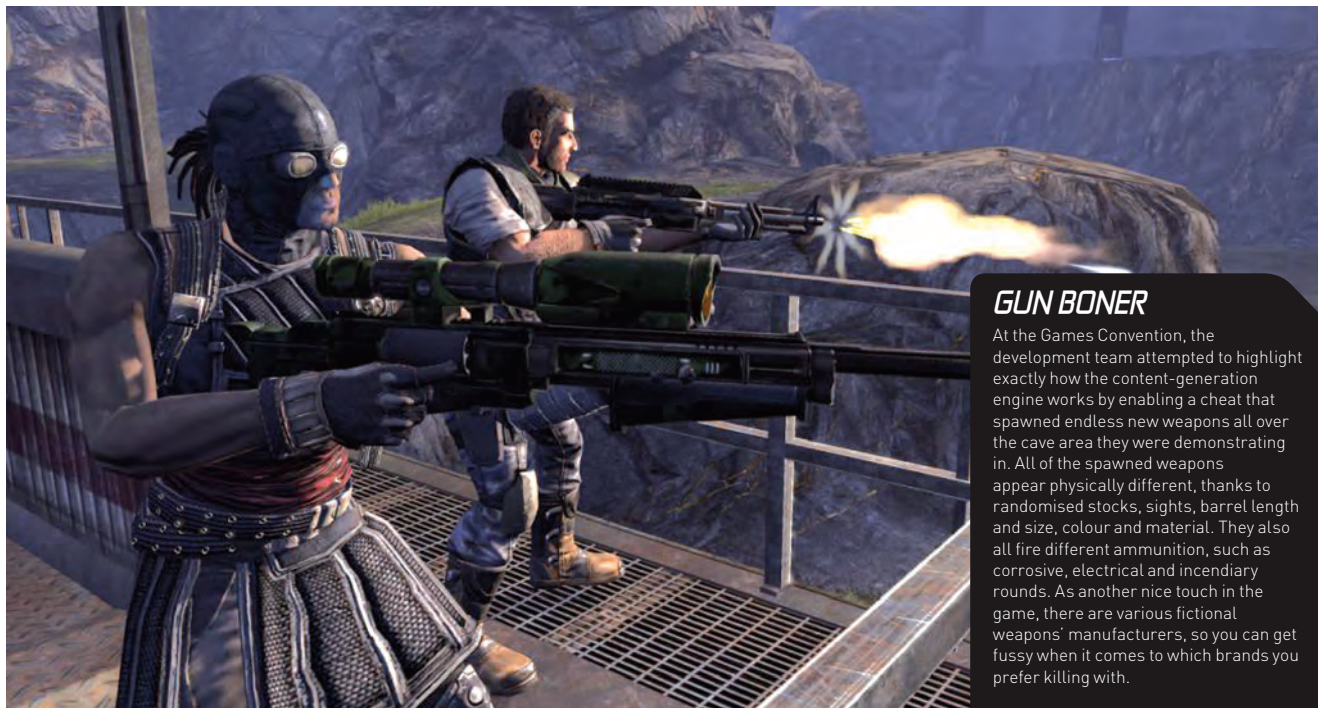
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## GUN BONER

At the Games Convention, the development team attempted to highlight exactly how the content-generation engine works by enabling a cheat that spawned endless new weapons all over the cave area they were demonstrating in. All of the spawned weapons appear physically different, thanks to randomised stocks, sights, barrel length and size, colour and material. They also all fire different ammunition, such as corrosive, electrical and incendiary rounds. As another nice touch in the game, there are various fictional weapons' manufacturers, so you can get fussy when it comes to which brands you prefer killing with.



# BORDERLANDS

**F**OR THEIR NEXT GRAND adventure, Gearbox Software is abandoning World War II and looking to outer space with a science-fiction RPG shooter called *Borderlands*. In terms of uniqueness, instead of coming up with a new hook or angle, the team behind the game is essentially combining several tried-and-tested game dynamics into one compelling package. By now, almost everyone has heard that *Borderlands* will feature hundreds of thousands of playable weapons. In fact, during the presentation at the Games Convention in Leipzig, it was calculated that *Borderlands* will have more weapons than every single game released for the Xbox 360 and PS3 combined to date. This (now-oversold) particular component of the hype machine has managed to unfairly dilute and overshadow the game's other respectable features by dominating early previews of the game. It's certainly an intriguing idea... but not the only one. Gamers can also look forward to a polished first-person shooter that will have drop-in/drop-out cooperative play for up to four players in a single game, as

well as some *Mad Max*-inspired vehicular combat. There's also a dynamic and deep role-playing aspect to the game where players will level up (from accumulated monster- and enemy-killing experience) and then have the option to allocate points to different skill attributes, such as improved aiming, faster reloading and so on. Additionally, as you use and favour certain weapon types through the game, you'll automatically become more proficient with them. Therefore, players who prefer sniping will get better with all sniper rifles, but their close- and medium-range weapon proficiency will suffer. There was no mention of a level cap, but when pressed for an answer, the developers thumb-sucked a level cap of ninety-nine – needless to say, this is subject to change. Besides all this, the game employs a content-generation system that will handle an endless variety of items drops (including armour, orbs and shields) and character customisation. As a bonus, some areas of the map will be procedurally generated, meaning no two sessions will play the same. *Borderlands*

is a very ambitious bite of gaming pie for any development team, and with so many interlinked components, let's all hope and pray that one doesn't suffer because of another. **NAG**

Michael James

## THE ROAD TO HELL...

Although yet to achieve runaway success, Gearbox Software is well known for the competent *Brothers in Arms* franchise (across all platforms). They're also responsible for *Half-Life: Blue Shift* [PC], *Halo: Combat Evolved* [PC] and *James Bond 007: NightFire* [PC]. Besides *Borderlands*, they're also working on *Aliens: Colonial Marines*. In terms of credentials, Gearbox has the expertise and ability, but tends to take their time getting games out the door. *Brothers in Arms: Hell's Highway* has been delayed numerous times. Realistically, if you do the sums (based on their history), expect to see *Borderlands* only late 2009 or early 2010. Visit Gearbox software at [www.gearboxsoftware.com](http://www.gearboxsoftware.com).



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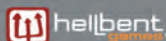
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Jump in.

XBOX 360 LIVE





# STORMRISE

**I F NAG RECEIVED R100** every time a marketing drone claimed that their next RTS was the "First, truly 3D RTS," we could afford to send a gamer to the Moon.

This claim is made about *Stormrise* by Creative Assembly, developer of *Total War* - a series no doubt familiar to stalwart real-time strategy fans on the PC.

"*Stormrise* has been built from the ground up [by Creative Assembly] specifically for high-def consoles to provide a more intense, frenetic style of game that, coupled with the all-new control mechanic, will revolutionise the way RTS games are played," claims SEGA Europe marketing director, Gary Knight. *Stormrise* doesn't stray from the pack with its setting: once again, near-future Earth is in peril, this time lacking its happy protective atmosphere. It's become a bleak and barren place; totally uninhabitable, so most people went into stasis until 'things get better'. Two factions emerged: the Echelon (military might in the humans-with-visors-and-guns theme we've come to know and love) and the Sai (tribals with dreadlocks who have evolved to run along skyscrapers).

*Stormrise* is part of a new breed of RTS games, with its aim to overcome the self-induced control barrier the genre has suffered for the better part of a decade due to its popularity being mostly centred on the PC and its input method (keyboard and

mouse). Creative Assembly forwent manual micromanagement and instead opted for a switch to broad strokes with a system dubbed the "Tactical Playbook." Attempting to keep the action going without the key-tap and rodent combo, the control method aims to give you all the strategic choices you'd usually get out of a traditional RTS, but with the ease of picking a manoeuvre from a playbook - no manually micromanaging your units into position.

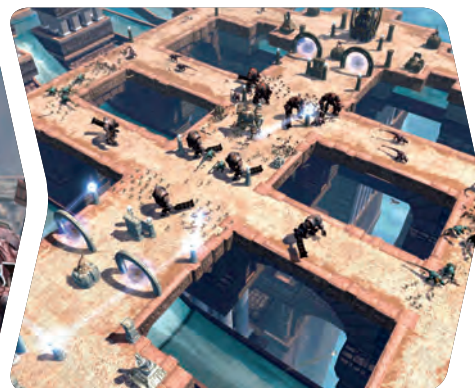
Trying to break the mould even more (and this is where the 'true 3D' part kicks in), the action takes place on battlefields composed of sprawling cities and skyscrapers, where units can move through the air, across rooftops, through the streets and even underground. In *Stormrise*, you lead from the front, issuing commands while checking out the action from a third-person view tethered to any unit on the battlefield. You'll also be able to hop into a battle at any time during multiplayer modes, though the exact nature of the modes is yet to be seen.

It's interesting to see the RTS game starting to finally evolve a little - in play mechanics if not story - as it attempts to break out of the house that *StarCraft* built. How many gamers are tired of the old furnishings remains to be seen, but it's rarely a bad idea for an old genre to recall that it has wings to stretch.

**NAG**  
Miktar Dracon







## DEMIGOD

Developer → Gas Powered Games | Publisher → Stardock Entertainment | Genre → RTS RPG | Release Date → February 2009

**D**EMIGOD IS ESSENTIALLY DOTA (Defense of the Ancients, a popular Warcraft III custom scenario) with a bigger budget. That and it's not a modification, it's a full-blown game. The core game dynamic is very tournament-based. After choosing a gigantic, extremely powerful demigod from a selection of possible candidates (each with their own unique purpose on the battlefield), you're placed in the arena and you'll have to attack your opponent's fortress while ensuring your own is well defended. The trick is knowing how far to push the attack before falling back to regroup at your base. The abilities each of the demigods wield will allow players

to pick avatars that complement those chosen by their teammates, and building a well-rounded team is key to success here. Friendly units called "creeps" spawn from portals around the map, although you have no direct control over these units (unless you choose a demigod with the ability to lead them). These creeps push forward in an attempt to destroy enemy fortifications and overwhelm enemy creeps. Your chosen demigod gains experience and gold as he/she kills opposing creeps and destroys enemy structures. More experience means new abilities (or upgrades of existing ones) and more cash means better equipment and

items. Your demigod may be all-powerful, but he/she can be killed, in which case you may drop some valuable equipment that the enemy could steal and use against you. On top of that, you'll have to wait until you spawn, which could give your enemy a valuable advantage with no opposing demigod to mess up his plan of attack. Emphasis has been placed on teamwork, and members of your team in a multiplayer match will need to coordinate their efforts in order to be most effective. Games are said to last around twenty to forty minutes, depending on the players and rules of the match. **NAG**

Dane Remendes

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### GITAROO MAN LIVES! [PSP]

There is a special place in heaven, reserved for developers who create games such as *Gitaroo Man*, *Space Channel 5* and *Parappa the Rapper*. The PSP re-release of the PlayStation 2 rhythm game comes with two new tracks for duet mode and retains all the magic of the 2003 original.

### N+ [DS]

The ninja with a scarf does even better on the DS than we expected. The action is split between the screens, a zoomed-in view below and a map overview up top, which is great for navigating the tricky, precision platformer (so you can eat gold before you die). You know you're in trouble when the game has two buttons: jump and suicide.

### DISGAEA: AFTERNOON OF DARKNESS [PSP]

The original, quirky, tactics-style *Disgaea* re-released on PSP? When did the PSP become such a haven for classics? We don't mind at all. *Disgaea* is one of those games where once you realise just how much depth there is to the combat system, you either cop a giant boner or you run away screaming. Or both? That'd be awkward.

### DJ PORTABLE MAX 2 [PSP]

This stuff is hot in South Korea. Taking the basic premise from *beatmania*, you jam to various 'pop-rock-jazz' gospel songs, hitting four, five or six buttons (depending on difficulty), 'playing' the song as if you're a whiz on a Casio keyboard. The sequel features level grinding, equipment that lets you gain gold faster with which to buy new DJs, etc. Addictive rhythm stuff.



### CASTLE CRASHERS [XBLA]

Actually, we've had to stop playing it for a while due to bugs wiping out our pets, weapons and gold. It's tough love when you absolutely adore a game, but it insists on abusing you and demands you to pay off its credit card when you're barely making ends meet yourself.

## ANATOMY OF A REVIEW

A quick guide to the NAG Reviews section

**VITAL INFO:** Where to get it, what it costs and who you need.

**PC SPEC:** Our rating for the hardware requirements of games is space age. Check the box on the other page.

**GAME NAME:** This end up. The bit you tell your friends. The bit you remember – with your brain!

**AWARDS:** Our awards mean something: it means we agreed on a game, which is rare, trust us.



## THINK INSIDE THE BOX

**ICONS:** It's just like a super-ultra mini-review: you just glance and learn!

**BOTTOM LINE:** Too many words, not enough pictures? Don't worry – we'll bottom-line it for ya.

**PLATFORMS:** Check it: new coloured-tabbed system showing which systems the game appears on and which one we reviewed it on.

**LIKE, Y'KNOW, STUFF:** We try to keep things in perspective using these two blocks.

**SCORE:** Sometimes it's a number (usually it is). Sometimes it's a picture, or something snarky. We like to mix things up a little.

World Poker Tour

Better Than

PC  
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Wii  
PS2  
PSP  
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The WSOPT Main Event without the \$10,000 buy-in

For Fans Of

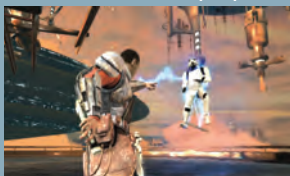
Bottom Line

Good presentation and realistic AI make WSOPT 2008 one of the best poker titles around.

78 OUT OF 100

## WEB SCORES

### THE FORCE UNLEASHED [360]



|              |          |
|--------------|----------|
| NAG          | 85/100   |
| METACRITIC   | 71/100   |
| GAMERANKINGS | 73.7/100 |

### SPACE SIEGE [PC]



|              |        |
|--------------|--------|
| NAG          | 78/100 |
| METACRITIC   | 59/100 |
| GAMERANKINGS | 57/100 |

### HELLBOY: THE SCIENCE OF EVIL [360]



|              |          |
|--------------|----------|
| NAG          | 35/100   |
| METACRITIC   | 45/100   |
| GAMERANKINGS | 48.7/100 |





## THE REVIEW ICONS

The NAG review icons aim to help you get a better idea of what a game is like.



**ACTION:** When you gotta blast, smash, crash and mash your way to victory, it's Action.



**BABYSITTING:** Put the kids to bed, you gotta Babysit this game to make it love you.



**BITCHIN':** When a game just plain rocks despite everything, then it is worthy of the Bitchin'.



**BORING:** Grab your blankie and teddy, we might be in for some Boring to put you to sleep.



**BUGGY:** Truth be told, there is just no excusing a Buggy game because games aren't cheap.



**BUTTON MASHER:** Using only the power of your manly thumb, you can beat this game, Button Masher.



**CASH-IN/LICENSE:** Some companies totally Cash-in on License games, good or bad.



**CINEMATIC:** Sweet-ass cut-scenes, dramatic camerawork and awesome scenes are Cinematic.



**CLONE:** We've seen it before and we'll see it again, because people always Clone good stuff.



**CO-OP:** It is dangerous to go alone. Take this. A friend. Water with cooperation for Co-op Attack.



**COMPETITIVE:** You don't think Ranked Match is a feature; you think it should be mandatory.



**FOREIGN:** No clue what the game is about or even what is said? Confusing plot? It's Foreign!



**MULTIPLAYER:** The maximum number of people who can play per copy of the game.



**ONLINE:** For games that play well with others and generally mean playing with others, Online.



**PARTY:** Get some friends and move the couch, Party games are frikkin' sweet.



**PIECE OF POO:** Sometimes no matter how hard you try, you just can't squeeze a diamond out of a turd.



**STUPID PEOPLE:** Don't worry little buddy, this game holds your hand like a friend.

## WILL IT RUN? - PC GAME SPECS

PC game specs are a pain for us, because we need to list them for those people who don't consult the box before buying a game. Instead, the reviews will now have a nice number ranking on the side. Higher numbers mean a game is more machine intensive. If a game has all the numbers lit up, it'll run on a 5-year-old piece of junk up to the most bad-ass of machines.

- 5 Your machine has a DirectX 10 graphics card, a dual-core or higher CPU and 2GB or more RAM. You are the centre of gaming-fu. This game will honour your investment. **[DX10 graphics card; dual/quad-core CPU; 2GB+ RAM]**
- 4 Your graphics card has a respectable 256MB of memory and your CPU sits at the higher end of 2GHz, backed by 1-2GB of RAM. A worthy rig for a worthy game. **[256MB graphics card with DX9; 2GHz or more; 1-2GB RAM]**
- 3 Your card sits between 128 and 256MB of RAM with at least DirectX 8 support, while your 2GHz Pentium 4 churns happily with between 512MB and 1GB of RAM. We assume you're slowly saving for an upgrade. **[256MB+ graphics card with DX8; 2GHz Pentium 4; 512MB-1GB RAM]**
- 2 Okay, so you have a graphics card that falls below the 128MB memory point but supports DX8, a chip that you can't call 2GHz even if you wanted and you have 256MB or less RAM. Your PC might be getting more Office action than you'd like to admit. **[128MB or lower graphics card with DX8; Below 2GHz chip; 256MB or lower RAM]**
- 1 You really don't think about your PC specs much. In fact, any hint of upgrade money is spent on something more practical, like a coffee maker with a timer. Fresh coffee first thing in the morning always beats playing games. **[Can run XP, will play game]**

## NAG AWARDS

**EDITOR'S CHOICE:** If a game boasts this award, it means everyone in the office agrees that the game rocks. Serials.

**MUST PLAY:** The thing about the Must Play award is that it can happen anywhere, with any game, good or bad. Somehow, you must play this game.



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## THE REVIEWERS

It was the dawn of the third age of mankind, ten years after the Console/PC war. The NAG Project was a dream given form. It's goal, to prevent another war by creating a place where humans and those guys who used PCs could work out their differences peacefully. This is the story of the last of NAG stations. The year is 2285. The name of the place is Negligent Asbestos Groundhog Magazine.

### DANE REMENDES

A thousand years ago, Dane used an alien artifact to change himself from console to PC gamer, and would later become the prophet that all PC gamers today worship. When Dane was born he was just a regular console user and commander of the NAG station, but would eventually travel back in time to fight in the first cartridge/CD-ROM war, taking the fourth NAG station with him through the temporal rift.



### GEOFF BURROWS

The race that Geoff belongs to had enslaved the home world of Walt (again), but Walt liberated his home world later by striking a deal with Geoff in exchange for killing the psychopath leader of Geoff's race. Geoff would later become emperor of his race and drink a lot, only to be killed by his best friend, Walt.



### WALT PRETORIUS

A warrior, a poet and a philosopher, Walt originally was a political envoy on NAG but would later become the leader of the rebel faction poised to reclaim Walt's home world from Geoff's race. In the process, Walt would lose an eye but gain a friend (and a resoundingly solid spiritual foundation after ingesting a hallucinogen not compatible with his species' physiology).



### ADAM LIEBMAN

Nobody had ever seen Adam outside his Encounter Suit, until Adam saved the life of Chris during a terrorist attack on the train Chris was on. The Adam race (so known since all members of its race are Adam, the race being an ethereal hive-mind collection of energy) has been around long enough to have abducted several prominent historical Earth figures, but only for the LOLs.



### CHRIS BISTLINE

In an unprecedented series of events, Chris managed to bring together all the races in the non-aligned league of Alienware worlds, creating the largest library of console, PC and portable games the universe had ever seen. He then proceeded to nuke a planet, punch out a public relations agent, and save the universe from the subsequent instalments of Too Human. When asked about his death, he simply replied "I was dead. But I'm better now". Total. Badass.

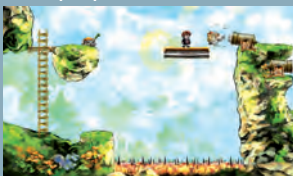


### TARRYN VAN DER BYL

Originally a console gamer and the actual reason the Console/PC Gamer war started (out of grief for her dead mentor, killed by an over clocked GPU in a cultural misunderstanding), Tarryn changed her species to PC using the same device Dane used, then fell in love with Chris and would later have babies. Strange, mutant babies that look casual but are really hardcore gamers.



### BRAID [360]



|              |          |
|--------------|----------|
| NAG          | 93/100   |
| METACRITIC   | 93/100   |
| GAMERANKINGS | 92.3/100 |

### BIONIC COMMANDO REARMED [360]



|              |          |
|--------------|----------|
| NAG          | 82/100   |
| METACRITIC   | 85/100   |
| GAMERANKINGS | 88.2/100 |

### TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 09 [360]



|              |          |
|--------------|----------|
| NAG          | 90/100   |
| METACRITIC   | 84/100   |
| GAMERANKINGS | 85.8/100 |



# STAR WARS: THE FORCE UNLEASHED

**NAG**  
MUST PLAY



**FEEL COMPELLED TO BLURT** out some quote or reference about the *Star Wars* universe as an introduction to this review. I've promised myself I won't, so I'll just dive right into it: *Star Wars: The Force Unleashed* is a great game. It's not perfect, but it's fun and that's the reason why we all play games. Whether it would stand on its own if it didn't have *Star Wars* in the title is irrelevant. The game is based on *Star Wars* and it hammers this home very well.

Set between *Episode III* and *IV*, *SW: TFU* lets you in on exactly what happened in that largely untouched space of time in the galaxy far, far away (I held out as long as I could – I love *Star Wars* just too darn much!). It's very difficult to talk about the story without letting a few spoilers slip out, so I'll give you the gist of it. You play Starkiller (at least, that's the codename used by your pilot to get your attention during missions), Darth Vader's super-secret apprentice. That's right: you're fuelled by the Dark Side for once. Your existence is in fact so much of a secret that no one but you, your pilot, semi-faithful robotic sidekick named Proxy and Lord Vader know about you. The prologue has you playing as Darth Vader himself,

who is far more powerful than Starkiller (at the start of the game at least), to give you a taste of the sort of abilities you'll wield as you advance through the game and to give you a bit of insight into the apprentice's back-story. When you begin your first mission as the apprentice, you feel very underpowered compared to Mr Vader. You're told to wipe out everybody you encounter on your journey to complete your mission objective, so you'll be tossing stormtroopers as well as resistance troops around the level. Nobody can know that you are Vader's apprentice, so everyone is game to be gutted by the business end of your lightsaber. Your ultimate goal is to eradicate the Jedi presence in the galaxy by hunting down any Jedi who may have survived Order 66, so many of the boss fights in the game involve lightsaber duels and force-flinging.

You don't start out with many abilities at your disposal. You'll become very dependent on Force Grip and Force Push in the early levels, since those are basically your only defence against your foes in terms of force powers. Thankfully, as you progress through the game, Starkiller gains XP and 'levels up' to gain points to spend on abilities and



RRP → R599 | Publisher → LucasArts | Distributor → Megarom | Genre → Action | Age Rating → 16

Look & Listen  
For the Fans

NAG



Reports indicate that The Apprentice's real name is Galen Marek. According to LucasArts, the storyline and characters will all be considered canon and will all become part of the Star Wars universe.

Force Lightning going about its dirty work. Having all this legendary power at your fingertips does well to appease your desires to be a Jedi. Not to the extent that being an actual Jedi would, but this is as good as it gets for now. We'll keep holding thumbs though.

## WE NEED MORE POWER!

Here's an example of how force upgrades work. At level one, Force Push is just a simple tap of a button to release a small burst of energy. At level two, you can charge your power by holding the button, and on release, an awe-inspiring wave of the force blasts all enemies in front of you backwards. At level three, the power physically damages enemies as it hits them, instead of relying on their impact with the environment to damage them. This game really unleashes the force. Force powers are meaty and satisfying and almost everything reacts to being hit by one of them. On Felucia and Kashyyk, plants bend and snap in two when a wave of Force Push hits them. It's all very cool to see in motion and there are plenty of great moments you'll remember long after the game finishes.



Euphoria in action. Note the Lord of the Dance impersonation, so lifelike, so... something. That's the power of Euphoria. Is technology moving forward? Allegedly it is.

The game is powered by "Ronin", a game engine developed by LucasArts. The game also integrates the Havok physics engine.

### Most Star Wars games

|             |  |     |
|-------------|--|-----|
| Better Than |  | PC  |
|             |  | 360 |
|             |  | PS3 |
|             |  | WII |
| Worse Than  |  | PS2 |
|             |  | PSP |
|             |  | DS  |
|             |  | MOB |

Having your own lightsaber and force powers



### Bottom Line

A great game that succeeds in many areas, but fails in others. An absolute must for Star Wars fans.







attributes, much like you'd see in an RPG. You'll also start unlocking new force powers (which can be upgraded) such as Force Lightning and Force Repulse, and there is a nice balance of offensive and defensive powers, although many of them can be used for either purpose. For instance, the Lightning Shield not only provides a bonus to defence, but it also improves your lightsaber attacks with some extra lightning damage. Lightsaber combos and character attributes can be upgraded, so by the time you finish the game, the apprentice will be a fully customised badass with insane abilities. You'll find secret power-ups hidden around most of the levels, which will either give you an instant point towards upgrading the category it is associated with (force powers, character attributes or combos) or grant you experience points towards gaining a level. A nice touch, which has been added to the game, is the ability to customise your lightsaber. Occasionally, you'll find a lightsaber crystal that will allow you to either change the colour of the beam of light, or it will be a crystal that actually adds a

tangible benefit (such as the ability to leech life from your enemies) to your attacks. The apprentice changes costumes throughout the game, but you can switch between your favourite costumes from previous missions on the fly.

The game plays brilliantly and it really feels as though The Force has been unleashed in this game. You're rewarded for killing enemies with style. Force Gripping an enemy, then quickly hitting him with Force Push will give you a 'cannonball' bonus. You can grab someone, hit him with some Force Lightning (thereby electrifying him) and use him as a human grenade to inflict some extra damage on enemies you throw him at. Enemies drop little health orbs when they're defeated (as well as gaining you some experience), and the more stylish the kill, the more benefits you'll receive. Boss battles are exceptionally tough, often infuriatingly so, with the difference between life and death literally decided by a single mistake on the player's behalf. Borrowing a few ideas from the *God of War* series, once you've beaten these bosses





down enough, a button prompt appears on screen that initiates a very cinematic fight sequence once you've hit the correct button. While continually hitting the correct button whenever a prompt shows up on screen during this sequence, you'll see the apprentice going full on with force powers, lightsaber twirling and lots of prancing around the enemy. Unfortunately, as awesome as these sequences are to watch, you never really feel as though you're providing much input and you're often too focused on hitting the right button at the right time to watch them anyway. Certain non-boss foes such as AT-STs and Rancors require the same approach.

There were times while playing the game that I literally punched my leg in frustration [calm you must be, Ed], thanks to the often-fiendish difficulty of some of the more hectic moments. Taking a few seconds to admire something in the game often leads to your demise, since the only time the action ever really holds up is during cut-scenes. While the game is not *Ninja Gaiden* difficult [your enemies dropping health when they die is a







## DMM AND EUPHORIA

DMM (Digital Molecular Matter) is a middleware physics engine, which makes objects in the game act similarly to how they would in reality. Hitting an object in a different way produces a different result each time. Taking into account the force of the impact, direction and what it is made of (wood, glass, etc.), you'll never get the same result when bashing an object. This can be seen especially when breaking apart glass panels, as each time you hit one, it will break apart in a unique way depending on the aforementioned factors.

Euphoria is a game-animation engine, which ensures that character movement and animation are synthesized in real time, as opposed to pre-defined animations. What this means is that characters will flail about in unique ways when you pick them up, and you can literally see them trying to regain their balance and hold onto stuff. This is quite impressive in action, as force-gripping a stormtrooper and making him float near a wookiee results in him grabbing the wookiee in an attempt to stay grounded.

huge help here), your health bar can quite easily drop from full to barely there at all in a matter of seconds. This can be contributed to the overwhelming odds the game has you up against, the environmental hazards strewn about the levels and the sometimes-unresponsive controls. Heed this warning: if you like your games to be a cakewalk, steer clear of *SW: TFU*. I love a challenge, so I found the game's difficulty to greatly add to everything that makes this game so appealing. You think Luke Skywalker had it easy. No, he didn't and you're lucky enough to be able to simply hit retry.

Technologically, *SW: TFU* is mostly flawless. The world has been perfectly designed to give it that unique *Star Wars* feel. Striding amidst the foliage of Felucia has never looked this good. The Euphoria and DMM engines (see the box out for an explanation of the technology) do a fantastic job bringing everything to life in a realistic way. The textures and backgrounds are gorgeous, the animations are spot-on and the cut-scenes have been done brilliantly.

The voice acting is brilliant, even though the original cast is absent. Darth Vader, the Emperor and the rest of the gang all look and sound as they should. The game is very cinematic and whenever people around the office came by to see the game in action, "oohs," "aahs" and cries of "OMG, that's awesome" could often be heard.

As much as I could ramble on about how great the game is, it does have its fair share of flaws. Even though this game is inherently very difficult (thanks to the sheer amount of enemies and the tactics they use against you), the camera is definitely your greatest enemy. Often you'll be too busy trying to fix the camera - which has decided to focus itself on a phallic-shaped plant instead of focussing on the action unfolding - rather than trying to fend off the enemies surrounding you. This leads to immense frustration, which in turn leads to battered and bruised legs (if other players take out their frustrations the way I do, at least).

Another issue the game suffers from is how linear it is. Although the character





customisation allows you to tweak the apprentice to suit your play style, you aren't able to alter the story much. This is *Star Wars*, however, so a mandatory choice at one point during the game decides the fate of the galaxy, but the rest of the time, you're following a set path. This may be unfair criticism, since the game is essentially telling you a story that you've been given the chance to become a part of. Secondary objectives can be completed during missions (rewarding the player with bonus XP) and that definitely helps to make everything a little less linear. The game is also fairly short (15-20 hours, if you take your time) and doesn't offer much in terms of replaying it. Multiplayer is absent in all but the Wii version, which we didn't have a chance to test.

*SW: TFU* doesn't innovate much, borrowing ideas from various other games and altering them to fit the premise. What it does do (extremely successfully I might add) is immerse you in a fantasy universe that we've all come to know and love. The action can get somewhat repetitive at times, but

the cut-scenes throughout the game always manage to get you interested again. By the time the end credits roll, you'll feel as if you've altered the course of history in the *Star Wars* universe, force-gripped it and shaped it to your will. Even though you already know what comes to pass later in the story thanks to *Episode IV, V and VI*, you'll feel as though you were the one who made it all possible - that you were the one who either brought hope to the galaxy, or brought about its demise. Gamers will enjoy this game thanks to its engrossing play dynamic and the awesome power they're able to wield. Fans of *Star Wars* will enjoy this game because it takes everything that makes *Star Wars* great, wraps it all up into one package and unleashes it in one explosive blast of force-powered greatness. **NAG**

Dane Remendes





# WARHAMMER 40,000: DAWN OF WAR THE COMPLETE COLLECTION

**WARHAMMER 40,000: DAWN OF War**, according to those in the know, is the best conversion of a tabletop war game to the PC. The first instalment was released four years ago, in 2004. Now, in 2008, it appears that the series is coming to an end. *Dawn of War*, thanks to the *Soulstorm* expansion, offers players a four-planet, non-linear campaign that will see them facing off against the eight races they didn't choose to play in a variety of environments. The main battle types are annihilation (which requires the enemy to be totally destroyed) and capture and hold (in which the player needs to capture and hold a certain number of strategic points for around eight minutes to secure a victory).

In fact, the strategic-position idea is central to playing this game, and one that sets it apart from most other RTS titles. By capturing strategically placed points (and

## THE EXPANSIONS

### Dawn of War

The original races included in the *Dawn of War* game were the Space Marines, Space Orks, Eldar and Chaos Marines. This was the core game, which introduced a linear single-player campaign, as well as the core game concepts.

### Winter Assault

The first expansion introduced the Imperial Guard faction, and added some nice effects and new units. These effects included wintery weather.

subsequently building fortified positions on these points), the player increases the production of one of the game's two resources – Requisition. Combined with the Power resource, Requisition allows for the building of structures, the recruitment of units and the researching of new technologies. But not every faction relies on Requisition. The Necron faction, for

### Dark Crusade

The third expansion introduced two new races – the Necrons and the Tau – and the first, non-linear planetary campaign.

### Soulstorm

The last expansion introduced the Dark Eldar and Sisters of Battle as playable factions, and expanded the non-linear campaign to encompass four planets in a solar system. Aerial units were also introduced.

example, doesn't make use of this resource at all. Power is generated by power generators, which the player has to build.

Along with positions that generate Requisition, two other kinds of strategic positions enhance the game. Relics allow for the building of the most powerful units when held, while the final positions can be vital to success in the game, but cannot be fortified.





Another interesting idea that *Dawn of War* makes use of is on-the-fly reinforcement on the battlefield. While all factions are subject to unit caps (one for infantry and another for vehicles), basic infantry units can be expanded upon by this reinforcement concept. Further, casualties can be replaced quickly by players staying on top of the situation, reinforcing units as soon as they suffer losses. Additionally, most infantry squads and vehicles offer field-upgrades of weapons.

This leads to one of the game's first hitches. Multiplayer games have a tendency to slow down and get boggy as players sit and constantly reinforce units that are damaged on the front lines. Players who are well matched will more than likely end up calling the game a draw after possibly several hours of reinforcement-inspired deadlock. An enterprising player will be

able to take advantage of the situation by changing tactics, but doing so at the expense of the front lines will almost certainly lead to disaster. Vehicles will often make the difference in this kind of confrontation, although the tactic won't work against certain races: the Tau, for example, are particularly adept at dealing with enemy armour.

With nine playable factions, *Dawn of War* is very difficult to master, even if the player is a dedicated player of only one of those factions. Each enemy requires a different approach, even if it is only slight. A full-frontal assault may work fairly well against the relatively weak Eldar, but storming Space Marines is not the best idea. Getting the most out of a faction in any battle requires the ability to understand how the faction performs against each of the enemy factions. Having a full understanding of the

## THE FACTIONS

### SPACE MARINES

The stock-standard fighting force, the Space Marines serve well as all-round combatants. Their abilities are straightforward, based largely on technology. They serve the Emperor unquestioningly.

### CHAOS MARINES

The Chaos Marines have the same origins as the Space Marines, thus having the same physical power. Due to their allegiance to Chaos, veteran Chaos Marines can be mutated, thus making them physically stronger, faster or otherwise superior.

### SPACE ORKS

The ultimate rush faction, the Space Orks rely on numbers where technology and tactics fail them. With quick building capabilities and numerous forces, the Space Orks are better when they overwhelm their enemy.

### ELDAR

Covert tactics and stealth are the strongest traits of the Eldar, who use high-powered weapons and cloaking technology to compensate for their moderately weak physiques.

### DARK ELDAR

The Dark Eldar aren't much tougher than their Eldar cousins, but are less reliant on stealth. Their use of souls harvested from combatants who fall on the battlefield allows them to power dark magic to overcome their foes through fear and confusion.

### NECRONS

The enigmatic Necrons use high-powered weapons and powerful technology to compensate for their relatively low numbers. Ancient and nefarious, this faction can even defy death, and is not reliant on the Requisition resource that other factions require.

### TAU

The scholarly Tau make use of high-end technology to deliver a powerful punch on the battlefield. Physically weaker than other races, the Tau rely on advanced vehicles and awe-inspiring technology.

### IMPERIAL GUARD

Almost as numerous as the Ork, the Imperial Guard are a militia force that combines high numbers of troops with a good level of technology – particularly in terms of heavy armoured vehicles.

### SISTERS OF BATTLE

The fervent Sisters of Battle are powered by a faith unlike any others. Using faith as a weapon, they deliver a strong performance on the battlefield, their ardour driving them to become a strong assault force, while still retaining good defensive abilities.





faction's offensive, defensive, stealth and detection capabilities is vital, as well as having a solid knowledge of how the other factions operate. Some may feel that nine factions spread the focus of the game too thinly, but the other side of the argument is that the variety of approaches represented by these factions is a refreshing challenge to the usual three or four factions normally found in RTS titles.

As well as introducing the Sisters of Battle and Dark Eldar as factions in the

game, the latest *Soulstorm* expansion also brings aerial units to the fight, although these new units aren't really worth the effort: most tend to be lumbering, weak and largely ineffective. *Dawn of War* is about fighting on the ground: that's where the action is the best.

This is just about the best time to get this game – if you haven't done so before. Getting the complete box set, which includes all the expansions, is a great deal. **NAG**

Walt Pretorius

## THE PAST

Originally published in 1987, the fifth edition of the *Warhammer 40,000* rules was released in July this year, and has introduced some significant changes to the tabletop strategy game.

For those who don't know what it means, *Warhammer 40,000* is played with a number of figurines (carefully painted and treasured by their owners) to simulate futuristic battles. Rulers, dice, measuring tapes and arguments are all used to try to best opponents in what is a long and complex pastime.

Naturally, when something is as popular as Games Workshop's *Warhammer 40,000*, videogames are going to be based on it (like virtually everything else in this world). The videogames that have been based on this exciting (if it's your thing) game are, in no particular order, *Fire Warrior*, *Chaos Gate*, *Space Hulk*, *Space Hulk: Vengeance of the Blood Angels*, *Final Liberation*, *Space Crusade*, *Rites of War*, *Warhammer 40,000: Squad Command*, *Warhammer 40,000: Ultramarines* and *Warhammer 40,000 Online*. Oh, yes, and *Dawn of War*... the only good game among the whole lot.

## THE FUTURE

The reason why this is called "The Complete Collection" is most likely because the developers won't be developing any *Dawn of War* expansions. While this may seem like a bad thing, the truth is that, with the expansions as they stand, very few races from the *Warhammer 40,000* universe are not represented. The game has pretty much achieved whatever it is going to in its current guise.

This brings us to the next reason why the end of the series is not going to be a bad thing: *Dawn of War II* has been announced, and it's looking good.

It looks like more of the same, to be honest, but with a few added elements that will enhance the experience. These include dynamic and destructible environments, a better tactical approach, a non-linear storyline (something that was, admittedly, introduced in the later expansions for the original) and a co-op campaign mode. It also comes with improved graphics, better sound and all the rest.

Rulers and dice



Warhammer 40,000



## Bottom Line

Rich and varied – a great alternative to some of the other RTS titles out there.



PC

360

PS3

WII

PS2

PSP

DS

MOB



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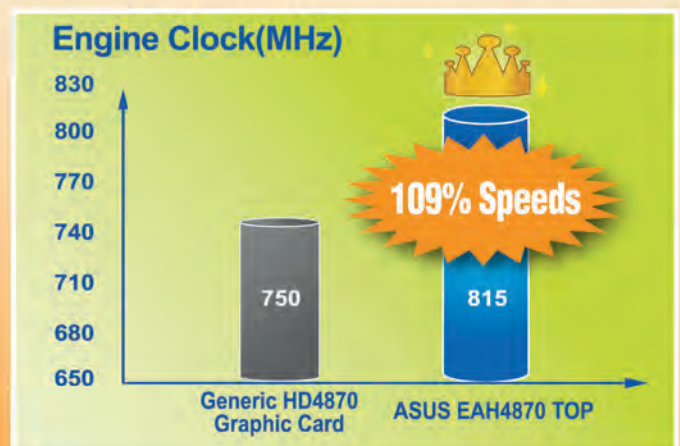
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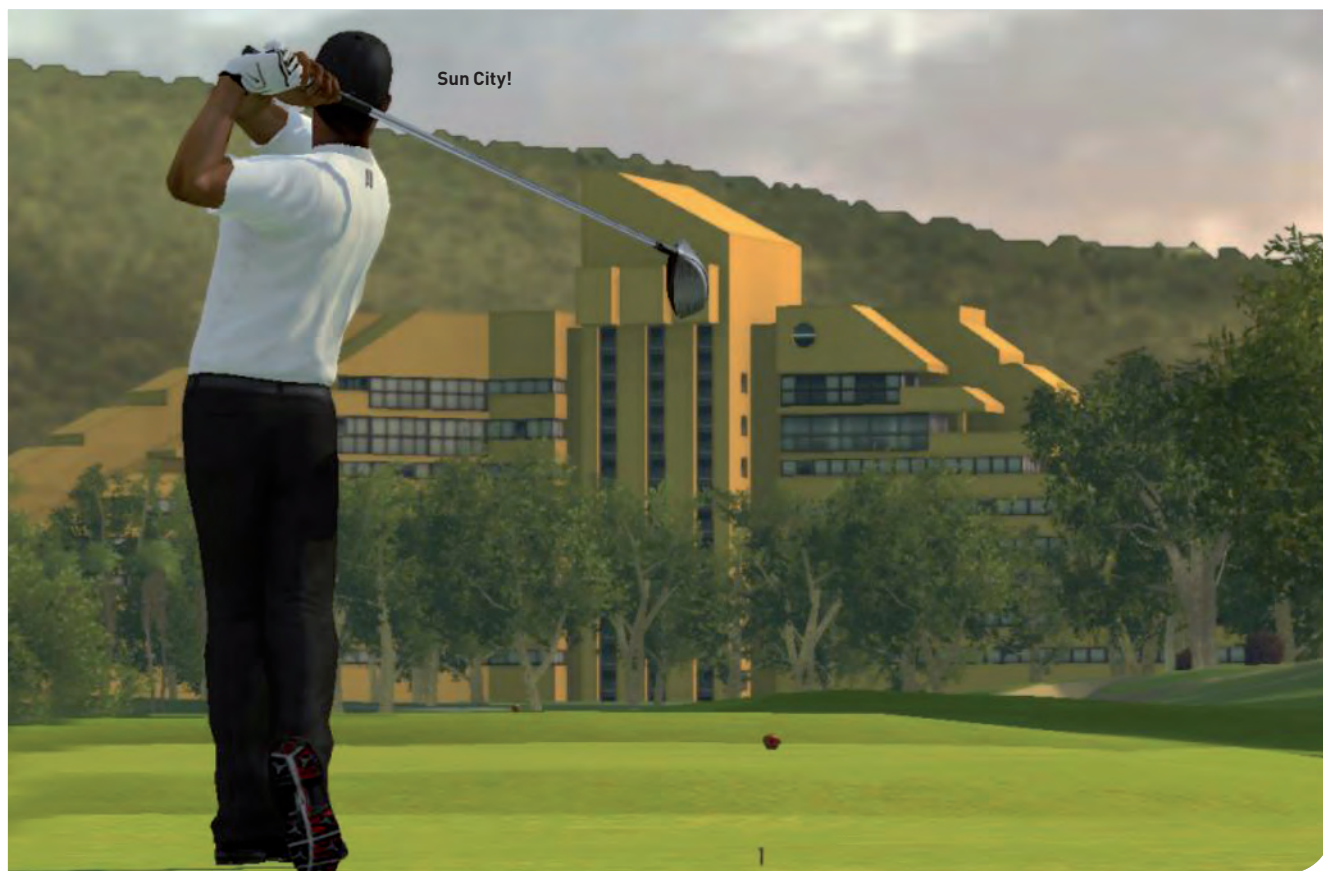
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## TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 09

**THREE THINGS ARE CERTAIN** in life: death, taxes and that EA will modify the last digit of all of their sports titles every year. Despite the fact that they've been producing the game since about 1420 (or perhaps because of it), *Tiger Woods PGA Tour 09* is a fantastically slick, well-produced game with loads of new features and tweaks, making it a significant improvement over *Tiger Woods 08*.

For the most part, *09* is the same game as *08*, and that's a good thing: *08* was the best golf game on the market. EA has elected to apply the philosophy of "if it ain't broke, don't fix it," which is something a lot of sports games fail at, seemingly feeling compelled to reinvent the wheel with every iteration of a game. Fortunately, this is not the case with *Tiger Woods 09*. The controls are identical to *08*: you hit the ball by pulling back the left analogue stick, then pushing it forward – clean and simple. In a slight improvement over *08*, an indicator on the lower left of the screen shows you in real time how straight your swing is,

allowing you to adjust for a hook or slice. If you're old school, you can still switch to the classic three-click system.

The game modes are all the same as well. You can create an original golfer (a digital double created from photos of yourself if you like) and play an entire PGA Tour season, play a quick match in a number of different formats, or work your way through the Tiger Challenge – a series of short events where you have to defeat several PGA Tour golfers to reach the ultimate showdown against Eldrick Tont "Tiger" Woods.

Of course, if they'd stopped there, no one would buy the next edition and it's the new features that make *Tiger Woods 09* absolutely shine. Perhaps the best feature is the new club tuner system, something that every golf game should have in the future.

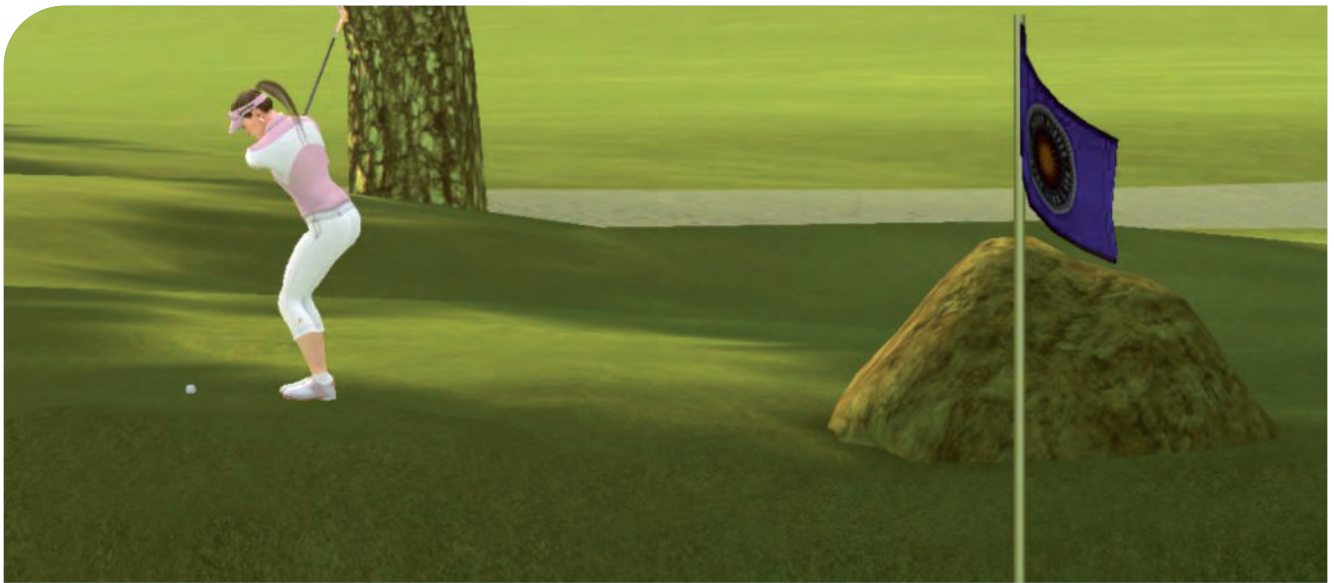
On the practice range, you can adjust your clubs to better suit your style of play. For example, if you want to get more distance off the tee, you can increase the power of your driver, but



you'll reduce the 'sweet spot' on the club, meaning you'll have a smaller margin of error when hitting a shot. You can also similarly adjust spin and workability (how much you can curve a shot left or right). But perhaps the best feature of the club tuner is the ability to compensate for a natural bias in your swing. If you tend to always hook the ball to the left when hitting a shot, you can adjust your clubs to naturally fade a bit to the right, thus negating the 'flaw' in your swing. All of your clubs can be tuned individually, so if you tend to hook your drives but slice your wedges, you can set the clubs up differently. All this adds up to make the game more approachable and less of a hassle to play.

Another new feature in *Tiger Woods 09* is the inclusion of Tiger's swing coach, Hank Haney. When you start a new game, Hank takes you out to the practice range and watches you hit a few shots. Based on how you do, your initial skill levels for power, accuracy, short game and putting are set.





After you play a bit, Hank then presents you with the opportunity to practice a few shots you had trouble with during your round. Beat the challenges in the practice sessions, and your stats will get a boost for your next round. Then, once you've finished your next round, a permanent change will be applied to your stats. If you played well, your stats in the specific categories will permanently increase. Play poorly, though, and they'll go down.

Most of the same classic courses make a return in this edition, including St. Andrews, Pebble Beach and TPC Sawgrass. New this year are a few "exotic courses from around the world" including the Gary Player Country Club at Sun City. The details are all spot on too, right down to the hotel and the slopes of Pilanesberg in the background. (You can even see a cellphone tower on top of one of the mountains). Even the colour of the sand in the bunkers is perfect.

Graphically, the game has received a major overhaul. *Tiger Woods 08* was

already a beautiful game, but the quality of the textures has been improved dramatically. The backgrounds, however, seem a bit low-res, and stick out like a sore thumb compared to the quality of the rest of the game.

If you're connected to Xbox LIVE while you play a round, you'll be issued with EA GamerNet instant challenges from time to time. Beat the long drive or hit your approach closer to the hole than the challenge, and you'll be awarded GamerNet points that can be used to update your avatar on [www.easports.com](http://www.easports.com). A four-person online game can now be completed in the time it takes to play a single-player round. Ball trails indicate your competitors' shots, allowing you to play whenever you're ready.

If you played *Tiger Woods 08* and enjoyed it, then you're certain to enjoy *09*. Just like Tiger himself, this game is the benchmark against which all other golf games should be measured. **NAG**

Chris Bistline

Better Than

For Fans of

Tiger Woods PGA Tour 08

Green Jackets

PC

360

PS3

WII

PS2

PSP

DS

MOB

**Bottom Line**

It's basically the same as *Tiger Woods 08*, but with a few major improvements.

**90**

OUT OF 100





## SPACE SIEGE

**I**N 2002, DURING MY (then) ceaseless quest for the next *Diablo* game, I stumbled upon a little title called *Dungeon Siege*. Developed by the newly formed Gas Powered Games and led by the legendary Chris Taylor (thanks to his previous experience with *Total Annihilation*), *Dungeon Siege*, along with its expansion packs and 2005 sequel, proved not only suitable for satisfying any hack-and-slash RPG cravings, but also managed to hold its own in a judgemental, hellfire-deprived world of rabid gamers. Now, almost seven years later and fuelled by their initial foray and continued success in the action-RPG market, Gas Powered Games is back with the spiritual successor to *Dungeon Siege*.

*Space Siege* kicks off with a traditional action-game approach to back-stories: functional and exciting, but managing to one-up tradition by offering a genuinely compelling rationale behind the players' and NPCs' actions in the game. Deep into the twenty-second century, humankind embarked spaceward on a voyage of discovery, hoping to find a new home. What

they found instead, unfortunately, was the Kerak: a race of bloodthirsty, insect-like aliens hell-bent on kicking humanity's ass all the way back to Earth. Not content with just beating us up, the Kerak bombarded Earth's surface, destroying all known life on the planet and sending any remaining space ships scattering for survival. You, as Sergeant Seth Walker, must fix the ship's pilot system to escape the destruction and then ensure the survival of humanity's last space vessel - the aptly named *Armstrong* - no matter the cost.

Sitting squarely in the action-RPG camp, *Space Siege* offers the player tons of exciting ways to kill aliens, cyborgs, robots and all sorts of terrifying nastiness. In fact, the RPG system - if it can really be called such - downplays so much of the usual customisability most gamers are used to in such games that it might as well not even be presented to the player. Even the loot system has been given a thorough smoothing-over to reduce downtime between the bouts of chaos and destruction. Instead of currency or the usual variety of

### PLUG AND PLAY

At specific points in the game, Walker will come across cybernetic upgrades ranging from robotic legs to a spine replacement to an entire cyborg head, all of which are completely optional to install, but cannot be removed once surgery has been performed. These upgrades provide a variety of passive benefits, but most importantly unlock new skills and abilities that would otherwise be unavailable. NPCs in the game will try to convince you one way or another to install the implants or not, but the truth is that the game is made noticeably easier by installing all of them, despite the loss of a few, rather neat, human-only tricks Walker can gain towards the end of the game.

steadily improving weapons and armour, players collect 'parts': generic loot that is used to upgrade Seth's and HR-V's weapons, armour and statistics at specific stations throughout the ship. Unfortunately, the upgrades provide little readily noticeable





benefit, only serving to balance the gently upward-sloping difficulty curve during the game's progression. The weapons, on the other hand, are varied, exciting and highly destructive, something that the game rewards with vibrant, physics-enabled explosions from almost every single object in the game world (*Space Siege* is a barrel-hunter's paradise).

Where the RPG side of things does get its chance to shine a bit is in the skills mechanic. Being a classless system, players can choose freely between the two distinct skill chains, offering Walker the option to increase his combat prowess or his science-related abilities. Combat skills will enhance damage, improve damage-dealing abilities and grant new ways for Walker to break faces, whereas Science improves the usefulness of grenade-like weapons, sentry and mobile turrets and, of course, Walker's robotic sidekick, HR-V.

The multiplayer mode is a humble addition to the game, allowing players to group together online or (thankfully) via a LAN to tackle over a dozen missions with adjustable difficulty levels. The missions are a cookie-cutter, bog-standard affair that range from collection to assassination to 'Deactivate X number of Y objects'. Players create a new multiplayer-only character that comes loaded with 40 skill points ready for distribution, as well as all the weapons and cybernetic implants unlocked and ready for installation (although it's becoming commonplace on the Net that all-human is

an interesting way to challenge yourself). While the multiplayer mode is a nice addition in terms of providing the player with more stuff to destroy (which is difficult to get tired of), as well as further insight into life outside that which is experienced in the single-player campaign, it's doubtful that one would really get hooked on multiplayer for much longer than a few weeks. Once you've fully upgraded a character or two and played each mission a couple of times, the generic loot system ensures that there's not much else left to discover.

Despite a handful of annoying (yet not game-destroying) bugs and a few other shortcomings in certain aspects, as well as the possibility of chasing away those looking for a deeper role-playing experience, *Space Siege* is a game that knows what it is and what it offers the player: non-stop, action-packed fun. There's nothing quite as exhilarating as rampaging through a horde of cyborgs, flamethrower-wielding HR-V at your side, watching crates, oxygen tanks, barrels and all manner of highly-flammable goods exploding around you. At the very least, *Space Siege* will keep you thoroughly entertained for the 18+ hours of gameplay. Single-player replay value is somewhat limited by the linear story and lack of particularly rewarding swag, but many players may want to at least play the game through twice to experience the two extremes between cyborg and human. **NAG**

Geoff Burrows

## HUMAN-CYBORG RELATIONS

While it may look a bit like Wall-E on steroids at first, Seth Walker's alien-crushing sidekick, HR-V (pronounced Harvey, I kid you not), packs a mean punch if you can micromanage. If micromanagement's not your thing, fear not: HR-V still performs well in most circumstances once you've spent a few parts on upgrades, ensuring that the player almost always has a reliable buddy on the battlefield.

A Metal Slug RPG



Big, pretty explosions



Kinda Like

For Fans of



## Bottom Line

Call it a 'light RPG' or an in-depth action game. Either way, it should appeal to many gamers.



PC  
360  
PS3  
WII  
PS2  
PSP  
DS  
MOB





## MX VS. ATV UNTAMED

**WITH THIS FIRST STEP** for Rainbow's *MX vs. ATV* series, the player will find a combination of good and bad elements, just like every other release in this series. The good news is that the good is better than before. The bad news is that the bad is just plain silly, frustrating and enough to ruin what might have been a fun game. That said, it should be noted that this is, without a doubt, the finest title in the series thus far, but if the history of the series is taken into account, that's not saying an awful lot.

Still, the improvements are quite obvious. Naturally, the graphics are a lot better, although they don't quite measure up to the top-of-the-line Xbox fare. They're not bad, but they aren't the best either. The impression of speed that the graphics create is fantastic, which, considering that this game is basically all about 'foot-flat' driving tactics, is a good thing. And that is all there really is to this game: driving really fast in the hope of being quicker than the opposition. Tactical racing isn't too much of an option, because Rainbow's approach to physics is (as usual in this series) a little off the mark. It's possible to get really big air, for example, at the top of a jump, but landing said jump is pretty tricky, and the reasons for seeing your rider splattered across the track (and getting

run over by opponents) seem to be a little inconsistent. Thankfully, this nasty physics model has been applied to the opposition as well, and landing your quad on some guy's head after a jump is a sure way to overtake him. Braking is also an interesting prospect, as the oversensitive controls mean that tapping on the brakes while coming into a turn will probably stop you dead in your tracks, rather than the desired slowing down.

The frustration arises from the fact that the game is quite demanding in what it expects from the player. It demands precision, which, thanks to the weird physics, is almost impossible to achieve. This is particularly true during the X-cross events, which are largely trick based... tricks that are near impossible to land. Add to this the fact that X-Cross events cannot be restarted for some or other reason, and the frustration levels just rise and rise.

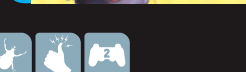
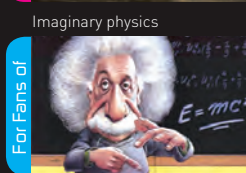
Should you not require ultra realism and enjoy the odd chuckle at in-game weirdness, this is a good option. There is also a lot to do in the game, which helps. Additionally, there are many vehicles and vehicle types.

Although we might have told you to avoid previous attempts in this series, things have changed a bit with this new instalment. It has officially achieved a "Try before you buy"

status. More forgiving gamers will probably get quite a kick out of it, but the pickier types will still want to look elsewhere. **NAG**

Walt Pretorius

The last MX vs. ATV game



Better Than

For Fans of



### Bottom Line

It's not the best racing game around, but it's better than others in this series.

PC  
360  
PS3  
Wii  
PS2  
PSP  
DS  
MOB





# STAR WARS THE FORCE UNLEASHED

Out  
Now

MAY THE FORCE BLOW YOUR MIND



#### UNLEASH EPIC FORCE POWERS

Use devastating combo attacks as you learn to master the Force.



#### DISCOVER THE UNTOLD STORY BETWEEN EPISODES III & IV

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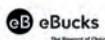


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Look & Listen  
For the Fans





# HELLBOY: SCIENCE OF EVIL

**IT COULD HAVE BEEN** worse. They could have subtitled this game "Science of Videogaming," which would have been an outright lie. Yes, folks, once again we have a movie-based game that just doesn't deliver. Once, just once, we would love to see one. All hopes we had for this one, though, were shattered a few minutes into this... game. The term is applied loosely.

One would expect a little challenge within the game. After all, 'Big Red' is a supernatural crime-fighter with a big punch and a bad attitude. The bad attitude has been toned down. The big punch is still there, but after you've thrown it a million times, it gets quite old. It's a step backwards for action games, delivering the kind of action that was cool when 16-bit was all the rage. These days it's just tired.

The boring combat could have been mitigated by smart enemies, but the bad guys in this title are so thoroughly stupid that taking them out is easier than dynamiting fish in a barrel - only far less fun. Enemies will run up and stand right next to Hellboy, pretty much waiting to get smacked. Occasionally, one of them might attack... if you're lucky.

On the other side of the spectrum are the game puzzles and movement

challenges. If the combat is ridiculously easy and boring, these are overly difficult and almost totally devoid of logic. For example, the player will be expected to complete unexplained tasks that are not based on any previous events in the game. The puzzles are ludicrously obtuse as well, based on what might be some kind of alien logic.

The story is also annoying. We might have been a bit more forgiving had the story been good, but it's not. It's disjointed, poorly constructed and often confusing. This is the kind of story that a seven year old might construct to explain how exactly Fido got to the homework assignment prior to eating it. Senseless twists, strange plot devices and the like characterise a rehash of a tale we've seen millions of times before.

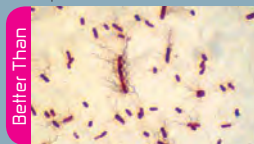
Even the weapons are weak. Literally. They break if you look at them funny, and are not even worth bothering with.

So, yet again, we have a potentially good - even great - game, ruined by indifference to the desires of gamers and the fact that this rubbish will sell, no matter how dismal it is. Okay, maybe it's not really dismal... it loads, after all, and it runs. But it certainly is not of the standard - not even close - that gamers want. Maybe one day there will be a

really great movie-based game. That day is not today, and *Hellboy: Science of Evil* is not that game. **NAG**

Walt Pretorius

Septicaemia



Pubic waxing



PC  
360  
PS3  
Wii  
PS2  
PSP  
DS  
MOB



## Bottom Line

Another movie-based game gone horribly wrong.

35  
OUT OF 100





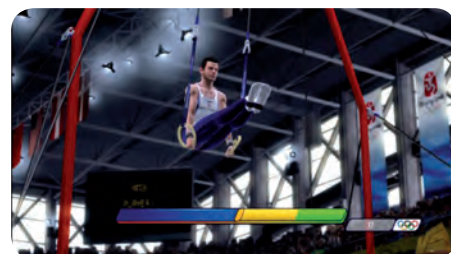
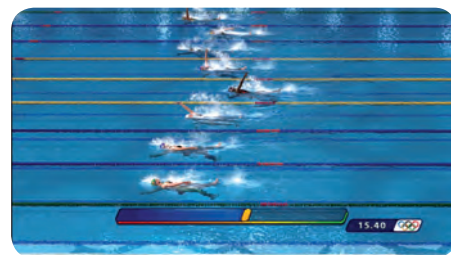
# HAF 932

## TURBULENT AIRFLOW

Built with three gargantuan 200mm fans, meshed with the Cooler Master patented airflow exterior, HAF 932 will blow you away. The massive airflow design and rugged steel body is sure to keep your valuable components safely tucked and well cooled for maximum performance. This lean mean gaming machine is ready for battle. Are you?







## BEIJING 2008

**PLAYING BEIJING 2008 IS**, for older gamers who still remember when coin-operated machines only cost twenty cents a pop, something of a walk down memory lane. I could not help but think about the old *Hyper-Olympic* title when I played this modern console game, purely because the ideas behind the two are so very similar.

*Beijing 2008* offers the player the opportunity to take part in a number of Olympic disciplines, including track and field events, aquatic events like swimming and diving, and various other sports, including table tennis, skeet shooting and cycling. It doesn't cover all the Olympic disciplines, but it does offer a wide variety of events to compete in.

The player can select any nation that took part in the recent Olympic Games and try to win a few medals... something which I thought would be good, even if it was just virtual. One silver medal in the real world... what the hell, guys?

The game is basically a collection of mini-games (one for each event) wrapped up in the Beijing theme. Each game features a slightly different control package, and requires a slightly different input from the player. Track events, for example, require the wagging of one of the analogue sticks on the controller, or the alternate mashing

of two buttons (each game offers a number of control options by default). Hurdles will require the same wagging, but will also need the player to hit one of the trigger buttons in time to jump each hurdle. Field events also require different degrees of wagging and careful timing. Some of the events, like the 10m diving, require a complex control input from the player that makes winning the event almost impossible. Some are very confusing and ultra tricky, leading to the same result. You don't need to play them, though – the player can choose events to take part in.

With good graphics and a promising multiplayer angle, *Beijing 2008* is an appealing, although not perfect, game. It's fun, but does have a number of flaws. The AI is very difficult to beat, for example, and some of the games are far too difficult to effectively control. It's a title that's worth a look, although a try-before-you-buy attitude is probably the best approach to this one. Sports fans should get a kick out of some of the events, but don't expect any kind of consistency throughout the title. Some events, like javelin, are great, while others, like table tennis, are really rotten.

Speaking of javelin, I am happy to announce that South Africa won gold in the

event, as well as setting a new world record. Sure, it happened in my lounge, but I still feel proud... **NAG**

Walt Pretorius

One lousy silver medal

Better Than

Worse Than

Winning gold in swimming

PC

360

PS3

WII

PS2

PSP

DS

MOB

**Bottom Line**

A fun game, but you'll want to be selective on event selection.

**70**  
OUT OF 100





## BRAID

**I**N A RADIO BROADCAST in 1939, Winston Churchill famously declared, "It is a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma; but perhaps there is a key." Obviously, he was talking about Russia or his wife or something, but it introduces *Braid* rather conveniently too. *Braid* is the *Portal* of platformers. And while *Portal* isn't actually really an FPS, after all, *Braid* isn't really a platformer, but rather a fiendishly clever, elegantly innovative, and inexhaustibly ingenious puzzle game masquerading as a platformer, where that terminally indispensable platformer gambit, "The princess is in another castle" takes on an altogether more esoteric meaning. This is probably where I'd usually park some cynical, drawling observation about its contrived relevance or bad spelling, but – gasp! – there's not a single negative thing I could possibly say about this game. This game is perfect in every way – go and buy it.

Superficially, *Braid* is a simple, side-scrolling 2D platforming game where the player must negotiate their way through six worlds and collect sixty puzzle pieces. The accompanying story sees Tim in search of a nameless princess (and owner of the game's titular hair extension). It's a strange, sad tale enfolded in several dozen philosophical strata

that might last you a month of dusty excavation with a Mithril pickaxe and 'The Idiot's Guide To Metaphor', so we'll leave that be.

Tim, meanwhile, has a rather enviable talent for manipulating time in all sorts of quite interesting ways. Primarily, he can reverse time. Death is therefore a minor parenthesis in the adventure, as any fatal mistakes can simply be undone. But where rewinding time has previously featured as a gimmicky sidekick (*Prince of Persia: Sands of Time*), it is absolutely crucial to *Braid*'s core gameplay. While this ability is initially introduced as a way to correct mistakes, it becomes an increasingly more complex technique in later levels, and in increasingly more bizarre ways. There is at least one stage in the game, for example, that must be solved by setting up a series of interactions and then rewinding all the way back to the beginning in order to effect them\*. In addition, each world features a second way to deceive time. In the third world, for example, the passage of time depends on the player's bearing: moving right pushes time forward, moving left pushes it back. That *Donkey Kong* stage over there isn't nearly as straightforward as it looks.

I won't say anything further for fear of revealing too much, but this is a game you

### IT'S NOT JUST US

Within three days of launching on Xbox LIVE Arcade, *Braid* had shifted over 28,000 copies, garnering wide-eyed universal acclaim and a 93% aggregate on Metacritic, making it the highest ever rated XBLA title and the eighth-highest ever rated Xbox 360 game on the site.

**NAG**  
MUST PLAY



simply have to play! **NAG**

Tarryn van der Byl

\* Not really a spoiler, as this will only make sense when you finally solve that puzzle.

A cheese dream, with platform fun



Time-based conundrums



Kinda like  
For Fans of



**Bottom Line**  
Extraordinary

**93**  
OUT OF 100

PC  
360  
PS3  
WII  
PS2  
PSP  
DS  
MOB





## BIONIC COMMANDO: REARMED

RRP→ 800 MS Points | Publisher→ Capcom | Distributor→ Xbox LIVE | Genre→ Platformer | Age Rating→ 16+

**H**AVING SEIZED THE BLUEPRINTS of some mad, top-secret military programme dubbed Project Albatross, fascist tyrant and Nazi-inspired fashionista, Generalissimo Killt, and his Imperial goons have laid siege to every tactically strategic installation across the Federal States of America. The FSA, understandably anxious to avoid some sort of cataclysmic disaster, promptly deploy their top man, Super Joe, to infiltrate the enemy lines and find out what the bad guys are up to. But Super Joe's mission is compromised, and the luckless operative is bundled off to detention. Hope is all but lost. Only one man can save the day.

You are Nathan "R.A.D." Spencer, just graduated from the local Bionic Commando Community College, where your winning smile, white high-tops, and

brashly overt machismo has marked you for great things in the world of special ops (well, I'm inferring here). And you've just landed your first big gig.

*Bionic Commando: Rearmed* is a significantly revamped version of the 1988, NES side-scrolling classic, *Bionic Commando*. It may have a pretty new coat of HD bloom-rendered paint slopped all over it, but this game is old school through and through, which essentially means that it's brutally difficult and relentlessly unforgiving. And just to be a total bastard about everything, you can't jump. And unless you can reach all the secret places (without dying, obviously), you have only three lives. If you're the sort of person who hurls controllers around when you fall into the same bloody spike trap for the damn twelfth consecutive time, you might want

to gaffer-tape pillows to your walls before loading this one up. Or just don't play it at all, because *Bionic Commando: Rearmed* is likely to remind you (and your rapidly dwindling patience) just how rubbish you are at these videogame things. Try the demo first. **NAG**

Tarryn van der Byl

PC 360 PS3 Wii PS2 PSP DS MOB



### Bottom Line

A super-sexy, nostalgic 'blast-o-rama'... with a **bionic arm!** Savagely difficult, though. **Savagely.**



## THE INCREDIBLE HULK

RRP→ R699 | Publisher→ SEGA | Distributor→ MiDigital | Genre→ Action | Age Rating→ 16+

**W**HEN I FIRST SAT down to play *The Incredible Hulk*, I was apprehensive. Games based on big-name movies have a habit of being poorly constructed, boring, buggy monstrosities that traipse through a watered-down version of the film on which they are based, generally not being any good for anyone involved in the whole process. While I can't, unfortunately, say that *Hulk* let me cast my doubts aside and run willy-nilly through the streets of gaming bliss, it did manage to initially exceed my expectations and provide me with a fair bit of entertainment - for a while at least.

Thankfully, the game's narrative has a bit more going for it than a singular focus on the film's storyline. Side-quests and sub-quests, which are in abundance courtesy of the *GTA*-styled mission-selection system, are fuelled by various stories and villains

found throughout the vast *Hulk* comic-book series. Hulk can bounce, stomp and smash his way through the missions at the player's leisure, and a generous helping of mini-games and achievement hunting is available to keep you occupied between missions, if you so choose.

Combat and movement are straightforward enough: *Hulk's* repertoire of comic- and film-inspired moves grows as the game progresses and the player completes certain challenges, providing motivation to hunt for the more obscure challenges to unlock new attacks and upgrades.

For all the fun and excitement of hurtling the green behemoth through the streets of New York (and it is fun), the game suffers from repetition, often requiring the player to do very similar, sometimes-

identical missions in close succession. This, combined with an extremely limited selection of scenery, repetitive damage models and daft enemies, will leave most players disinterested once they've done most of the cool stuff within the first quarter of the story's progression. **NAG**

Geoff Burrows

PC 360 PS3 Wii PS2 PSP DS MOB



### Bottom Line

Fun for a while, but it soon loses its appeal.







## FERRARI CHALLENGE: TROFEO PIRELLI

RRP→ R679 | Publisher→ System 3 | Distributor→ Ster Kinekor Interactive | Genre→ Racing | Age Rating→ 3+

**UNDoubtedly** one of the world's most illustrious car manufacturers, Modena-based Ferrari has been producing vehicles that epitomise style and performance for over 60 years. System 3 attempts to do justice to the esteemed marque's heritage with *Ferrari Challenge: Trofeo Pirelli*.

The game features 16 real-world tracks and more than 50 different Ferraris plucked from different points in the company's history. The vast line-up includes classics such as the 250 GT, modern favourites like the 550 Maranello, and legendary supercars such as the F40 and F50. The bulk of the game, however, is spent in the F430, playing through the F430 Challenge that comprises the main single-player mode of the game. Each event in this mode consists of a qualifying session and two 15-minute endurance races. Although this does

become tedious, given that there's only one type of car available in this mode, progress in the F430 Challenge is necessary to earn credits that unlock vehicles for use in the game's other modes.

Where *Ferrari Challenge* truly shines, however, is in the driving experience it offers: each vehicle offers a different but convincing feel, with the emphasis squarely on accurate simulation rather than all-out speed. With the available driving aids switched off, the game becomes almost mercilessly demanding, in a way sure to satisfy racing purists.

Visually, although *Ferrari Challenge* doesn't quite meet the standards set by the likes of Polyphony's *Gran Turismo 5 Prologue*, the vehicles are well rendered and will please Ferrari fans no end. For devotees of the Italian car manufacturer,

*Ferrari Challenge* offers a competent racing-simulation experience, as well as an opportunity to tinker with many of the company's most prized vehicles. However, for those looking for a more diverse or accessible racing experience, there are other suitable PS3 racers available. **NAG**

Adam Liebman

PC 360 PS3 Wii PS2 PSP DS MOB

\$

**Bottom Line**

Competent racing game that offers plenty to indulge Ferrari devotees, but too limited a game for the rest of us

**68**  
OUT OF 100



## OVERLORD: RAISING HELL

RRP→ R699 | Publisher→ Codemasters | Distributor→ Ster Kinekor Interactive | Genre→ Action | Age Rating→ 16+

**DEVELOPERS HAVE LONG BEEN** aware of almost every gamer's hidden desire to play as the bad guy, and Codemasters look to extend that opportunity to PS3 owners with their port of 2007's Xbox 360 and PC release, *Overlord*. Bearing the subtitle *Raising Hell*, the PS3 version of *Overlord* corrects a few of the shortcomings of the Xbox version, as well as making the original's additional downloadable content available right off the bat. For those unfamiliar with *Overlord*, it puts the player in control of a mysterious dark lord, awoken from a very long slumber by his evil minions and charged with the task of restoring his evil empire and the glory it once held. This mostly involves venturing out into a fantasy-inspired world inhabited by Halflings, unicorns, flowers, happiness,

and a variety of other generally non-evil things. Helping you to negotiate and eventually overrun this treacherous land is a number of impish minions, who gladly carry out your orders. These minions follow the Overlord through the game's various environments, waiting to be ordered to attack foes, pillage treasure chests or even prey on harmless livestock in order to replenish Life-force, the crucial energy that eventually allows the Overlord to summon up to 50 minions at once. Minions come in four different varieties, each with different abilities such as extinguishing flames or performing sneak attacks that need to be put to strategic use through the game's extensive campaign. Unfortunately, the often-deliciously tongue-in-cheek *Overlord* experience is marred by dated

visuals, and occasional clunky controls and camera positioning. Overall, however, the game manages to be an entertaining offering that puts a relatively fresh spin on its genre. It's sadly not as immersive as it could've been, but it's a fairly enjoyable execution of quite a novel concept. **NAG**

Adam Liebman

PC 360 PS3 Wii PS2 PSP DS MOB

\$

**Bottom Line**

An enjoyable, if somewhat underdeveloped, tongue-in-cheek take on fantasy games.

**70**  
OUT OF 100



## A LACK OF LEARNING

**M**OSHITO IS HAPPENING PRETTY much as this is being written. For those who don't know, Moshito is a big, music industry get-together, and this year's conference is all about new media and technology. The topic of contention that is sure to come up is the way that the mobile and music industries interact. There are many arguments sure to be slung back and forth. This does lead one to wonder, though, about the state of mobile content provision in South Africa, particularly when it comes to games.

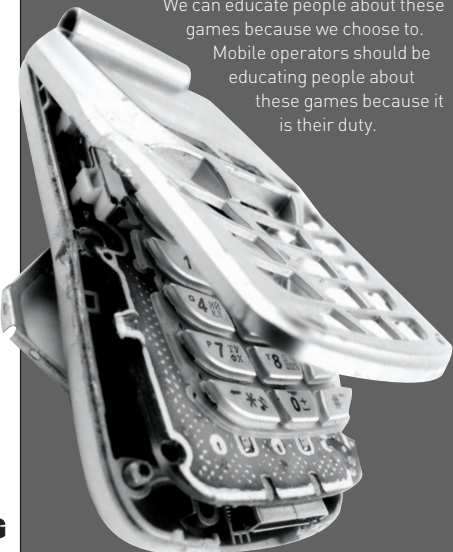
It would seem to the nonprofessional, and quite rightly so, that the South African mobile industry is very focused on music. It's understandable: music is huge, and delivering music to cellphones is a massive and lucrative market. However, if what we see happening overseas are indicators, then games are big business too. Very big business, in fact, with more than one operator overseas attributing a large portion of its content success to the sale of these bite-sized, convenient bits of gaming delight.

Why then do South African service providers seem to battle to sell games? Sure, they sell the products, because if they didn't, the products wouldn't be available. But when compared to sales overseas, the South African performance is paltry.

The argument could be levelled that gaming as a whole in South Africa is not comparable to the rest of the world, but this is largely due to the high prices of hardware and related gaming titles. Cellphones are different. Despite what socioeconomic factors may imply, South Africa has a very high user base of cellular handsets, and the cost of games for these handsets is relatively low, topping the scale at around R50.00 for a mobile triple-A title. Surely these things should be flying off the virtual shelves, particularly when considering that entertainment sales are often increased in times of recession... something to do with distraction from reality and all that stuff. The truth is quite simple, and a little disturbing. It lies in the fact that consumers don't know about the products: consumer education about games is basically nil, and the marketing that happens for them is next to nothing (though you'll hear about real-tone music downloads in virtually every form of advertising media). The reason for this is because the local operators are poorly educated about games, and don't seem willing to learn. This ignorance and lack of motivation are resulting in poor performance: the public isn't just going to buy games. That assumption has been proven wrong in the videogame market, and is being proven wrong for the mobile market as you read this.

We can educate people about these games because we choose to.

Mobile operators should be educating people about these games because it is their duty.



## A POTTERY DELAY

**I**T MUST HAVE BEEN a little annoying for EA to learn that the next *Harry Potter* film, namely *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, has slipped to a 2009 release date when it was supposed to hit the big screen in November this year. That's largely because EA holds the licence to produce the associated video- and mobile games.

Still, the mega-publisher is upbeat about the product.

"We're excited about the *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* videogame in development and its high level of authenticity and playability," said Robert Nashak, Vice President, EA Casual Studios. "We are creating an immersive game experience that *Potter* fans around the world will really enjoy playing as they fly and duel their way through the story of the film. The game will feature new Wii gestures and increased game-play capabilities across all of the platforms."

"The *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* game will be an excellent interactive extension of the film and all of the new action that comes with it," said Martin Tremblay, President, Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment. "EA is creating the *Harry Potter* videogames that fans will love, and this game will deliver new game-play elements and the magic players are looking forward to."

"We have enjoyed a wonderful partnership with

EA in collaborating on the videogames for all of the *Harry Potter* films," said film producer, David Heyman. "The visual look of the game for *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* is incredibly authentic and will provide a truly compelling experience for everyone who plays."

Players can expect the predictable return to Hogwarts, and will be able to engage in a number of *Potter*-esque activities. As far as the movies are concerned, the studio should hurry up and make the last one before the actors go into retirement... they don't look like teenagers anymore.



## ZUNE GAMING LIKELY

**I**T'S NOT EXACTLY A mobile phone, but Microsoft's Zune is still a portable device... and now it's going to be fully game capable. The newest version of the device's firmware will support games, with developers able to use Microsoft's XNA development tool set to create them.

The official line goes like this:

"Games rock on your Zune. Zune Players now come with a selection of fun, free games to choose from. Play the popular poker game *Texas Hold 'em* or challenge yourself to a game of *Hexic*, and make sure you play your favourite song from your collection to create your own personal game soundtrack."

European and African gamers can sit back and relax though: getting all excited about this is pointless, as the Zune hasn't seen release in these territories just yet. Whether or not this competitor to the iPod will be released here in South Africa is unclear at this time.



## MORE JEWEL-POPPING FROM EA

Almost everyone who plays mobile games has at least tried *Bejeweled*, PopCap Games' super-popular puzzle title. With a perfect fit for the mobile platform, *Bejeweled* has earned EA, the official publisher, more than a few bucks worldwide. So, it's little wonder, then, that EA is extending the publishing licence agreement. EA will still be supplying the game until 2010.

Despite speculation and spectacular sales figures, neither PopCap nor EA has revealed any details on new *Bejeweled* games. However, looking at previous publishing agreements EA had, like *Tetris* and *Doom*, it seems likely that a few variations of the *Bejeweled* theme, or at least a *Bejeweled 2*, should be on the cards.





# SPORE

RRP→ R50

Publisher→ EA

Genre→ Arcade/puzzle action

Download→ SMS Nag109 to 083 123 686

**O**KAY, SO MY EXPERIENCE with this game was a roller-coaster ride of "impressed" and "annoyed," but the ups far outweighed the downs. The menu presents you with two game modes: Evolution and Arena. The former is the single-player campaign mode, where you play through 18 levels, including a boss level, to evolve your critter. For those of you familiar with the other versions of *Spore*, all the action here takes place in the Cell stage. You start in the primordial ooze, and eat smaller critters to grow and to assimilate DNA. Between levels, you get to evolve your critter, adding parts that give abilities, and customise its shape and colour scheme. Stay away from bigger critters, as they hurt you – but if you grow bigger than they do, you can eat them! The game play is quite addictive. The action is controlled via the directional keys, or the keypad, but you'll want to play this on a handset that is comfortable for playing games.

Upon finishing the Evolution game, which can be accomplished in less than an hour (yes, I found this too short, but read on, as all is not lost), you unlock the Survival mode, which is an arcade-style game that has you collecting pellets and power-ups while avoiding bad guys – rather like *Snake*, just without a tail, and with bad guys

instead. This is basically an open-ended game that just keeps getting harder, until you eventually kick it, so you just play for a high score.

Okay, but what about Arena? This is the online multiplayer component, where you get to play your spores against those of other players. In this regard, Evolution actually acts as a 'character designer', because you get to select any of your evolved spores here. Unfortunately, while the feature is great, and allows a fair amount of interaction, such as browsing other people's spores, and top-ranked players, it is tripped by the hoops that one has to jump through in order to sign in. EA needs to realise that what works on PC is not necessarily phone friendly: for example, logging in via an e-mail address can be a serious ball-ache for those of us with long e-mail addresses, never mind having to make some 40 key-presses to type a password.

Overall, however, this is an unusually addictive game, and has remarkable replay value thanks to the various 'evolutionary paths' one can take, as well as the online play support. Highly recommended! **NAG**

Alex Jelagin

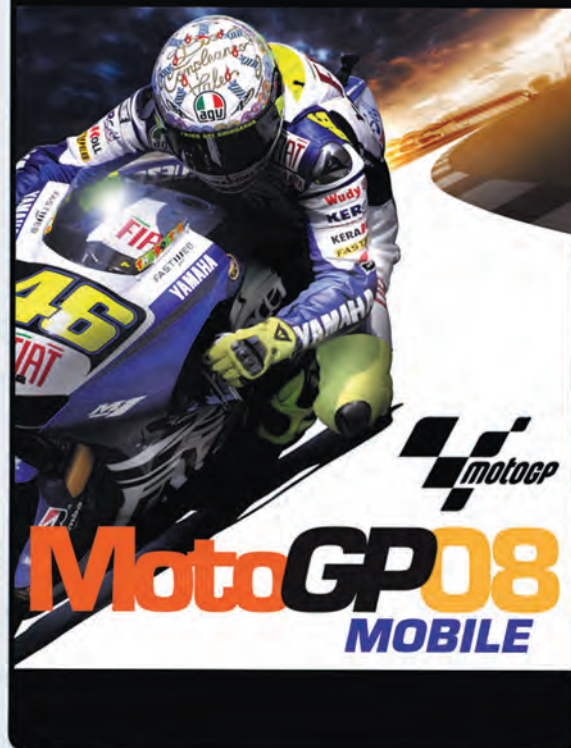


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# MOTOGP 08



RRP→ R50  
Publisher→ I-Play  
Genre→ Racing  
Download→ SMS Nag106 to 083 123 686

**I HAVEN'T BEEN A FAN** of the *MotoGP* series of mobile games. Honestly, I wanted to believe in the franchise, but something has always been amiss. Yet, there is something about a super bike tearing around a track at break-neck speeds that instinctively awakens a yearning in most boys' (and a few girls') hearts.

So, could *MotoGP 08* be different? Could it temporarily dull a craving for life-threatening speed, if only on a digitally mobile level? In my opinion, yes. Including all of the current season's riders and eighteen famous tracks, I-Play's latest offering is more packed than a Japanese metro train at rush hour.

Playing this title is simply good fun. Learning to navigate through corners may take a few attempts to master, but the game is by no means difficult. Auto-acceleration is standard and the grey matter spared can be used to jostle for position, because jostle you will! Well-designed, bug-free presentation and quick-loading graphics all add to the appeal, but the decisive factor is the sense of speed. It almost makes you forget that in reality you're playing a simple left-right timing game!

If racing isn't your thing, fair enough: there are many great mobile puzzlers out there. For the rest, download *MotoGP 08* now. **NAG**

Rory Smith-Belton



PC 360 PS3 WII PS2 PSP DS MOB



Bottom Line

They got it right this time.

**85**  
OUT OF 100

# RALLY STARS

RRP→ R50  
Publisher→ EA  
Genre→ Racing  
Download→ SMS Nag107 to 083 123 686

**RALLY STARS IS A** fantastic technical success.

The 3D engine, once loaded, is fast and able to deliver an engrossing environment the likes of which isn't commonplace on mobile Java games. A number of features that are ubiquitous on the console cousin's racing titles are included in this mobile port. For example, the player can choose to race from a first- or third-person perspective, and after completing an event, is automatically launched into a race replay. If anything, this serves to remind us that even the casual gaming market is serious about looking good. But at what price?

How about unusually long loading times? Or finicky car control and crash mechanics? Nothing worse than a rally car with a severe case of over steer. And don't you love it when a competitor collides with you, automatically slowing your car down, only to see his get a little extra boost? Like a modern pop star, *Rally Stars* may look good but it could do with a little extra soul.

A word of advice: don't enable sounds. The two in-game noises are more annoying than Windows' 'ding.wav' at full volume at 3:13 in the morning.

*Rally Stars* is by no means average, but a little tweaking could've added the killer blow to an otherwise great-looking title. **NAG**

Rory Smith-Belton



PC 360 PS3 WII PS2 PSP DS MOB



Bottom Line

Technology 1 -  
Gameplay 0.

**72**  
OUT OF 100

# SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER

RRP→ R40  
Publisher→ Player X  
Genre→ Music  
Download→ SMS Nag108 to 083 123 686

**WHAT'S A GOOD WAY** to make a below-average product? Well, take a great original idea that made a rival company buckets of cash and then copy it. Instead of spending money on emulating the original title's qualities, rather spend money on a licence, which should have died out about two decades ago.

Welcome to *Saturday Night Fever*, a music rhythm game along the lines of *Guitar Hero*. At its core is a dexterity challenge, where the player has to follow the on-screen cues to get their cellphone avatar dancing. Graphically, the title wouldn't be out of place on a dual-chromatic screen, with blue dominating the menu and pre-CGA green the actual dance action. This seems a bit at odds with the multi-coloured lights of the disco era. Never mind that the tinny sounds that are synonymous with mobile games do this title no favours either.

So, poor sound, limited graphics and a tiresome game routine. Surely then there must be some decent secrets or achievements to be unlocked? Um, no. Unless I'm blind and the victim of a frontal lobotomy, I counted two game modes and just one location.

*Saturday Night Fever* aims to do very little, and succeeds in the only area it didn't want to. Proceed with caution. **NAG**

Rory Smith-Belton



PC 360 PS3 WII PS2 PSP DS MOB



Bottom Line

Still better than  
watching the movie.

**30**  
OUT OF 100



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# FIFA09



10

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# ERNIE ELS GOLF 2008

RRP→ R50

Publisher→ EA

Genre→ Sports

Download→ SMS Nag104 to 083 123 686

**G**OLF FANS WHO ARE setting aside *Tiger Woods PGA Tour 09* for a while can resort to playing a game associated with one of the other great golfers: Ernie Els. Despite being a mobile game, which often implies a trimmed-down version, this title is actually a solid golf simulator.

The system works on the old-fashioned three-click idea: one click to start the swing, the next click to determine power, and the final click to determine accuracy. It works well, but it does take some practice. The target areas are relatively (and understandably) small, and reading the lay of the land can get tricky at times. A handy map of each hole is provided above the game screen, but it can still be a challenge, particularly when putting. A technical approach is also a good idea.

With selectable clubs and a variety of different shots and upgrades available, *Ernie Els Golf 2008* offers the player a fairly comprehensive and enjoyable experience on the mobile platform. The controls are simple, and the graphics are good, but the actual game dynamic can take a bit of getting used to. **NAG**

Walt Pretorius



PC 360 PS3 Wii PS2 PSP DS MOB



## Bottom Line

A solid game, but it could use a bit of refining.

79  
OUT OF 100

# MONOPOLY: HERE & NOW - THE WORLD EDITION

RRP→ R50

Publisher→ EA

Genre→ Platform

Download→ SMS Nag105 to 083 123 686

**P**LAYING A BOARD GAME on a mobile phone is probably a bit of a weird idea, but people who play board games are a bit weird, myself included. Still, though, a board game doesn't necessarily translate well into any other gaming format. There's something tactile about board games that goes missing in the video- or mobile-gaming arena.

That, however, shouldn't be the reason for someone to not play *Monopoly: Here & Now - The World Edition*. Not liking *Monopoly* is an acceptable reason, but who in their right minds doesn't enjoy that true classic board game?

*Monopoly* on the mobile works just like the new World Edition of the board game. The player 'rolls' the dice and moves around the board, purchasing properties (cities, as opposed to the traditional streets) and tries to outsmart the opposition. Cities are grouped in colours, and getting a full set of colours means that the cities can be improved... just like the physical game. One of the joys of this version is that all those late-night, slightly drunken rules arguments don't happen - the game has all the rules covered.

Other essential parts of the game, like auctions, trading and going to jail are obviously included, and are perfectly handled. The animations and graphics are clear and cute, and the control scheme is wonderfully simple. This is a very good way to kill some time on your mobile. **NAG**

Walt Pretorius



PC 360 PS3 Wii PS2 PSP DS MOB



## Bottom Line

A great new take on an old favourite.

82  
OUT OF 100

# DEWY'S ADVENTURE

RRP→ R50

Publisher→ Konami

Genre→ Platformer

Download→ SMS Nag103 to 083 123 686

**D**EWY'S ADVENTURE IS AN average platform game. What sets it apart from the rest is high production values, some quirky gameplay elements and a certain charm that the game inherently features. Playing as Dewy, you'll spend your time moving through the game's levels, collecting gems and other items, jumping between platforms, fighting various enemies and once you're done with a particular set of levels, you'll have to defeat a boss-character. You can morph between three different forms depending on the environment you're in. The standard form is water Dewy, which is great for general platform stuff like jumping, bouncing on enemies and the like. The second form (ice Dewy) is good for floating on water and spinning to damage enemies. Vapour Dewy stuns enemies with a lightning-based attack and can jump farther than the other forms. These forms make for varied gameplay and knowing when to use the right form is where most of the challenge lies. The game is nicely polished and works well if all you're looking for is a little light-hearted fun, but it won't be long before you get bored. **NAG**

Dane Remendes



PC 360 PS3 Wii PS2 PSP DS MOB



## Bottom Line

Join the navy, make friends, shoot aliens and shag someone, shoot aliens and shag someone.

70  
OUT OF 100





T190, T200, T220,  
T240, T260

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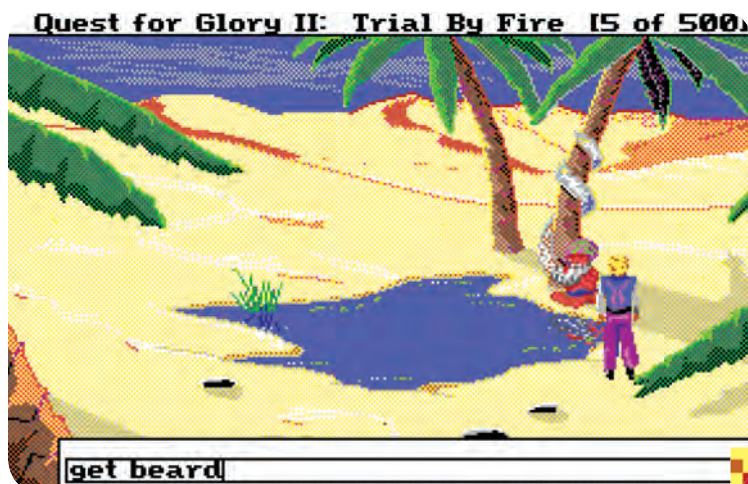


# QUEST FOR GLORY II: TRIAL BY FIRE

**H**AVING RESCUED SPIELBURG FROM a formidable array of menaces (a gang of brigands, a grumpy kobold mage, an ogre thug, and the somewhat incongruously situated mythological Slavic villain, the Baba Yaga!), rescued the Baron's wayward brats, and recovered Abdulla Doo's stolen flying carpet, our hero, [Your Name Here], is shuttled off to the wind-swept minarets of Shapeir. With the city under siege by gargantuan and rather temperamental elemental beings, the sultan's pal Arus having been abducted, the wicked wizard Ad Avis hatching some sort of insidious plot to take over the universe with his pet djinn, and a chick out in the desert who's been turned into a tree, there's all sorts of fun to be had over there.

And by "fun," we mean "really dangerous stuff that nobody else wants to do because they totally might die or something." Fortunately, you can buy a big lizard to lug your arse around the dunes, so at least you won't be getting sand in your curly shoes.

With its compelling and complex storylines, innovative character progression, and multiple playing paths, Sierra's five-part, genre-defining adventure/RPG *Quest for Glory* series represents the finest gaming of its era<sup>2</sup>. Well, the first four anyway, as the fifth was admittedly a wee bit rubbish. So why did we pick the second one for this Looking Back feature? Well, we're so pleased you asked. After eight years in development and any number of indie vaporware awards, AGD Interactive has finally released its remake of this *Arabian Nights* and Monty Python-inspired classic. With the original 16-colour EGA and text parser replaced with lush 256-colour VGA and a point-and-click interface, *Quest for Glory II* is all dressed up and playing like a royal harem tart. And for those of you who still have an ancient glory1.sav file hidden in some dusty recess of your hard drive, you can import it into AGDI's version. Grab the game at [agdinteractive.com](http://agdinteractive.com) for the princely sum of nothing. **NAG**



## EXTRA, EXTRA, EXTRA! READ ALL ABOUT IT!

Among the mostly useless items for sale in Keapon Laffin's magic shop is a pair of X-ray specs. They're also mostly useless – unless you happen to be wearing them during the late game sequence where you help the lovely Zayishah to escape the luckless city of Raseir. When she slips behind a veil to change clothes, your otherwise entirely forgotten inventory item will keenly penetrate the gossamer barricade, granting you a voyeur's eyeful of... well, just a few indeterminate flesh-coloured pixels. But it was apparently very hot or something back in 1990. You'll be docked one of those invisible Honor points for your salacious indiscretion, mind you, so if you're hoping to get your shiny Paladin badge, best save your game beforehand.

<sup>1</sup> Stuff that happens in *Quest for Glory I*. There's also a hot centaur babe that sells apples, if you're into that sort of thing.

<sup>2</sup> Tarryn will poison anyone who disagrees.



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# office quite close really...

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## WAKE UP...

**T**HE CLOSER WE GET to the end of the year, the more we hear about, and the less we see upcoming products, as most companies wait until the New Year to launch. However, I can tell you that we'll see a new Intel CPU before the end of the year. In fact, if you are reading this before or during rAge, make your way to the Intel stand where you will see the new beast on display. What will disappoint you, however, is that there is no benching software installed, so you won't know how much faster it is than the current Core 2 Quad range of CPUs until the actual launch. We hope to have our paws on the review sample in time for the November issue!

Talking about review samples, we were blown away by the AMD/ATI 4870 X2 this month, and it has pleased the NAG girls enough to award it the lap-dancer award.

Thanks guys! We have received a lot more mails recently and some interesting questions. Please make sure to stick to the subject heading so that we don't miss your e-mail. However, I do think that there are a few guys who may ask questions that need immediate response for whatever reason. If this is the case, simply add 'Urgent' to your heading 'Hardware Q&A' and send your mail to [len.nery@tidemedia.co.za](mailto:len.nery@tidemedia.co.za).

**Len Nery**  
Hardware Manager



## HARDWARE Q&amp;A

**"I SAW THE DREAM MACHINE** page in NAG. I have a question concerning the PSU in the Dream Machine.

Why the Zalman 1,000W? What makes it so exceptional? I am asking because I am putting together my own 'Dream Machine' and I am still undecided about the PSU I would choose. I am looking at:

- 1) Antec 1,000W
- 2) Cooler Master 1,000W
- 3) Zalman 1,000W
- 4) Silverstone Strider 1,000W

Any help or feedback would be appreciated. Which one of the four PSUs would you recommend and why? Or is there any other you would recommend?

Now the ball is in your court. Send your questions to [len.nery@tidemedia.co.za](mailto:len.nery@tidemedia.co.za) with the heading 'Hardware Q&A'.

SIDEWINDER X6  
GAMING KEYBOARD

## MICROSOFT'S RANGE OF GAMING-ORIENTATED

hardware is due for a few big additions over the coming months. Following from the success of their adventure into SideWinder gaming mice in 2007, the company has decided to carry the brand over to keyboards, starting with the ultra-funky SideWinder X6 gaming keyboard.

Boasting a design unlike anything you've seen before, the X6 is prepped and ready to go head-to-head with the current reigning champs of the gaming keyboard arena. Most notable is the removable Num pad, which users can switch to either side of the keyboard for easy access to macro keys or simply leave off if faced with a cramped LANing environment. When put into gaming mode, the Num pad functions as a set of dedicated macro keys, all of which can be programmed to perform anything from simple chat functions to complex command strings in your favourite RPG.

Another handy feature is the Cruise Control function, which sends through a continued keypress signal to the PC without requiring you to hold down the key; up to four keys can be Cruise Controlled at a time. FPS gamers will also be happy to know that their needs are being catered to – the commonly-used WSAD keys feature front-facing lighting to enhance visibility during those late-night gaming sessions in your gloomy Bat cave.

Rounding up the new SideWinder range is the SideWinder X5 gaming mouse. This beast features adjustable 2,000DPI laser tracking, five customisable buttons, adjustable weights and a quick-launch button to launch the Vista Games Explorer.

Expect the new SideWinder duo to be available by the time you read this, coming in at approximately R600 for the X5 and R800 for the X6 – putting the devices squarely in the veteran gamer or technology hoarder segment of the market.

NVIDIA'S STOCK  
DOWNGRADED

UBS ([www.ubs.com](http://www.ubs.com)), arguably the world's leading financial institution, voiced their concern over the future prospects of NVIDIA, and as such has put the brakes on by downgrading the chip maker's stock, fuelling a drop in shares by more than 4.1% in one day's trade on 8 September 2008. UBS has also lowered NVIDIA's price target to \$11. This is in strong contrast to 2007, when NVIDIA was listed as 'hot stock' on the US stock market, but the shares have since dropped by a staggering 60%. If that wasn't bad enough, NVIDIA announced an astronomical loss (nearly two hundred million US dollars) for the second quarter of 2008, with a production glitch being a large contributing factor. Besides that, UBS isn't very optimistic about the future growth of NVIDIA, due to AMD's sustained growth and Intel's high-end GPU (codenamed "Larrabee") set to hit the market soon. These will affect NVIDIA's current home and business markets. In other words, NVIDIA shares aren't worth much at the moment. Let's hope they pull things out the bag!

**Jaco Scheepers**

I also saw that the ASUS Xonar D2 sound card has being replaced. Why?

Thanks for the excellent magazine. Keep up the good work."

*Hi Jaco*

*The Zalman PSU is truly special. However, that doesn't mean that the other brands you listed aren't any good. Personally, I would highly recommend the Cooler Master PSU as an alternative to the Zalman, purely based on my personal experience with it. Neo loves the Silverstone Strider, so it would be between those three. The soundcard... well, read the review in this issue.*

*Thanks for your mail.*

**Len**





#### SAPPHIRE HD 4670

Since the release of the 48-series graphics cards from AMD/ATI, we have been spoilt by amazing performance, including DirectX 10.1. The fact that you are able to buy a top-of-the-range 4870 X2 GPU for less than a single-GPU solution from NVIDIA still amazes us. There is even better news: you can now lay your hands on a 4670 GPU for around R800! These RV730-based graphics cards are fast (750MHz core), affordable and use less power (maximum 70W) than a NVIDIA 9600GT for example. Check out the full review in the November issue.



#### PORTABLE GAMING POWER

Toshiba has just launched the Qosmio X300, a power-house gaming notebook that slots into their performance PC range. With all the latest advancements in graphics and processing technologies, gaming notebooks are now in a position to offer high levels of performance for even the most demanding of games. Based on Intel Core 2 Duo Extreme processing technology, the X300 scales up to support dual hard drives, NVIDIA graphics processors, and Harmon Kardon audio outputs. From a looks point of view, the Qosmio X300 is a real stunner, sporting an eye-catching "Rouge Glamour" cover. A red LED illuminates the multimedia bar, the touch pad and the tweeter speakers, while the bass speakers are decorated with a unique flame design.



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## ANATOMY OF A REVIEW

A quick guide to the NAG Hardware Reviews section

**VITAL INFO:** Age, weight, favourite drink and sexual orientation.

**PRODUCT NAME:** Good to know when you wake up in bed with this hardware.

**AWARDS:** Check out her hot sister on the right side of the page!



## DROP YOUR ROCKS AND READ THIS BOX

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| ROPS     | 16 x 2                            |
| SHADERS  | 320 x 2                           |
| SCORE    |                                   |
| ★★★★★★★★ |                                   |

## NAG AWARDS

**DREAM MACHINE:** We have a dream. That only the best hardware gets this hot chick, waving her derrière in the air like she just don't care.

**HARDWARE:** Ever wonder why it's called hardware? If something has this award, then someone got hard for the ware.



## HARDWARE SCORING SYSTEM

Our hardware scoring system is based on the reviewer's expert opinion. The scale is from 1 to 5 with no fractional values. Each number has a specific meaning, described below. Most products will score 3 or 4, with the occasional 5 or 2, and almost never 1. Note that a high price alone can never lower a score below 3.

- 5 The stuff of Legends. Buy it while you can, we probably already have.
- 4 A good deal; worth it if you're shopping for one.
- 3 About what you'd expect, no problems. You might want to wait for it to go on sale.
- 2 This has some issues. You should probably shop around for something else if possible.
- 1 The stuff of Nightmares. You'll probably be sorry you got one, even if it was free.

## NAG INTERVIEWS....

**RICHARD RADUE, DIRECTOR OF** Digital Chancel Solutions (DCS), distributors of brands such as Logitech, Verbatim, Fellowes, HP, Labtech and Siemens (to name a few) and now their impressive list of vendors includes the Dutch company, Sitecom. During September, I attended the launch of a brand-new product range and met a vendor representative at the Michael Angelo Hotel in Sandton and was really impressed. Sitecom was founded in the Netherlands during 1998 as a home-networking specialist company that aims to make setting up a home network easy, yet secure. In this issue, we take a look at their gaming-specific wireless 300N XR Gigabit router. I admire DCS and what they have achieved during years that I have been dealing with them. At the helm is Richard Radue...

**Firstly, thanks for your time and secondly, congratulations on the acquisition of the Sitecom range of products. Why Sitecom and when did you guys first decide on them?**

**Richard:** We chose to partner with Sitecom, as their understanding and approach to home wireless networking fits well with the DCS strategy: quality, user friendliness, simplicity and innovative design. Typically, wireless networking has been perceived by the home user as a difficult technology to install, use and maintain. Security of data has also been an issue. Sitecom offers a comprehensive range of affordable wireless networking products that are simple to install and manage.

**I want to cast your mind back a number of years to your previous premises in Kyalami, when Fellowes and Logitech were your premier brands. During those years, Logitech had no real representation in SA apart from DCS, and I firmly believe that without you, most gamers would not be enjoying Logitech products. What prompted the move to your current premises?**

**Richard:** As the business grew, the old premises were bursting at the seams, and the work environment was becoming cramped and uncomfortable. It became difficult to keep up the levels of service and stock that we needed to maintain the growth at the time.

**What is the core focus of DCS?**

**Richard:** Our strategy is to provide a range of premium brands of computer peripherals and accessories to the retail market. The core products that we offer – laptops, cellphones, GPSs, Hi-Fi and video – make using digital devices more fun, and easier to combine into a total digital experience.

**Where do you see DCS in five years?**

**Richard:** The range will probably change as the convergence of technologies increases. Vendors who adapt to the changes in the way information is used and shared will prosper. We will also have to continually evaluate the range of products and services offered to our customer base, so that we continue to offer significant benefits. We will need to ensure that the ranges offered make the digital information available to us simple and fun to use.

**Where do you see retail in ten years? Do you see any significant changes in the way we buy our hardware?**

**Richard:** The traditional retailer will need to offer a complete yet flexible home solution, where products will allow gaming, fun, entertainment and business to operate in an integrated home network. Online shopping will grow exponentially.

**What's the most exciting product you have ever seen?**

**Richard:** I think that this changes regularly – depending on what comes up. Some of the great Logitech products – at the time – were the G-25 Steering Wheel and the MX Revolution Mouse. Currently we are testing a digital pen that works with high-frequency sound and a USB memory stick to convert handwriting to text. It may sound old hat until you see the demo.



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world's fastest graphics card.

If you guys have any questions or suggestions, send us a mail with the subject heading 'Dream Machine' to [ten.nery@tidemedia.co.za](mailto:ten.nery@tidemedia.co.za).

Welcome to the drool....



### PROCESSOR

Intel Core 2 Extreme QX9650 (R8,228)  
Intel Corporation [011] 806-4530



### KEYBOARD

Enermax Aurora (R447)  
Frontosa [011] 466-0038



### MONITOR

Acer AL2623W 26" Widescreen LCD (R4,999)  
Axiz [011] 237-7000



### COOLING

Zalman Reserator XT (R3,456)  
Frontosa [011] 466-0038



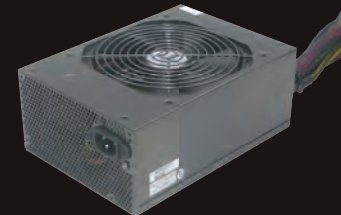
### MOUSE

OCZ Equalizer Laser Gaming Mouse (R399)  
Syntex 0861 274 244



### MOTHERBOARD

ASUS Extreme Rampage (R5,789)  
ASUS [011] 783-5450



### POWER SUPPLY

Zalman ZM1000-HP 1000W (R2,033)  
Frontosa [011] 466-0038



### GRAPHICS CARD

Sapphire HD 4870 X2 (R6,400)  
Frontosa [011] 466-0038



### STORAGE

WD Caviar SE16 500GB (R755)  
Drive Control [011] 201-8927



### MEMORY

Corsair TWIN3X2048-1800C7DF G (R4,699)  
Frontosa [011] 466-0038



### CASE

Cooler Master Cosmos S (R1,818)  
Sonic Informed [011] 314-5800



### SOUND

Creative X-Fi Titanium Fatal1ty (R1,799)  
Creative





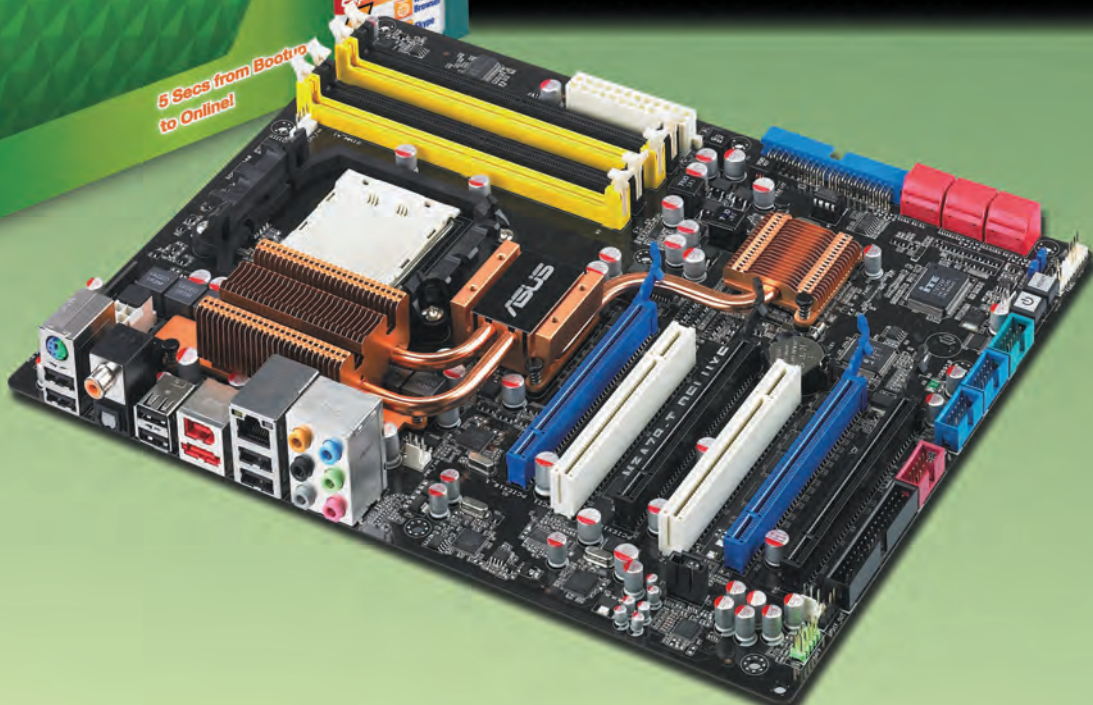
# ASUS M3A79-T DELUXE

## All-in-one Solution for Extreme Overclocking Potentials



The new ASUS M3A79-T DELUXE is a motherboard capable of delivering higher overclocking, better graphics and fast Internet access. Integrated with the latest AMD 790FX/SB750 chipset that provides an innovative new power design to support 140W powered CPUs, the M3A79-T DELUXE features HyperTransport™ 3.0, quad PCIe 2.0 x16 slots; and ATI Quad CrossFireX™ and AMD OverDrive™ (AOD) support. Additionally, the innovative ASUS Precision Tweaker 2 offers ultimate overclocking potentials with meticulous 0.02v adjustment per step for the NB, SB and DRAM voltages - working in tandem with the AMD AOD for customized overclocking settings in Windows for greater performance tuning margins. This motherboard also incorporates the ASUS Express Gate, which only takes 5 seconds\* to go online from bootup without entering Windows for excellent entertainment options; and utilizes only the highest quality power components like: low RDS (on) MOSFETs, Ferrite core chokes, and most importantly 100% high quality Japan-made conductive polymer solid capacitors for higher power efficiency, better stability and lower temperatures for the best overclocking results while providing longer component lifespans.

\*Actual boot time is subject to hardware configurations and product models.







by Neo Sibeko

# The Ultimate Gaming Motherboard

**O**VERCLOCKING, AND IN PARTICULAR competitive benchmarking, much like anything else, gets better when the people involved in the hobby are actually involved in the design of the hardware they will eventually be buying. However, this will only work if designers and engineers are on the same page as the people who will eventually be buying the hardware. Most of all, manufacturers need to realise that there isn't such a thing as a gaming motherboard.

While it is true that no other group of people are likely going to stress any piece of hardware more than enthusiasts, it is also true that no other group of people will overlook the very basics of a motherboard like enthusiasts, so their opinion cannot and should never override common sense, as is often the case with many great motherboards.

Overclockers and enthusiasts, in their quest for benchmark records, subject motherboards to extremely harsh tests. To them, it's numbers above all else. Less than optimal SATA header placement and such are a massive headache to many people, but entirely overlooked by enthusiasts because they rarely have more than one hard drive plugged into the system. They never get to hear what the on-board sound sounds like, and for the most part, can hardly ever tell you how disk performance is on a drive.

This is why a distinction between gamers and overclockers must be made. For gamers, gaming-orientated peripherals, 3D stereo glasses, mice, keyboards and such are important. However, that doesn't necessarily extend to motherboards. As sad as it is to say, abit, who has since announced that they will cease manufacturing motherboards, never made a distinction between the two. As great a competitive gamer as Fatal1ty is, selling a motherboard based purely on his endorsements probably wasn't a wise idea. This is quite simply because the marketing was targeting the gamer, while the engineers tried to target the enthusiast. At some point, this may have been one and the same person, but that hasn't been the case for several years. The truth of the matter is that there isn't a single motherboard on Earth that's better suited to gaming over another equivalently priced motherboard. There is no advantage to be gained, despite the insistence of the manufacturer, in using a motherboard tailor-made for gamers over a similarly priced motherboard.

In fact, how exactly would one go about making a motherboard for gamers? Since I am primarily an overclocker, it's hard to imagine how one would gain an advantage in *Call of Duty* using an abit Fatal1ty board over a competitor using a Foxconn Quantum

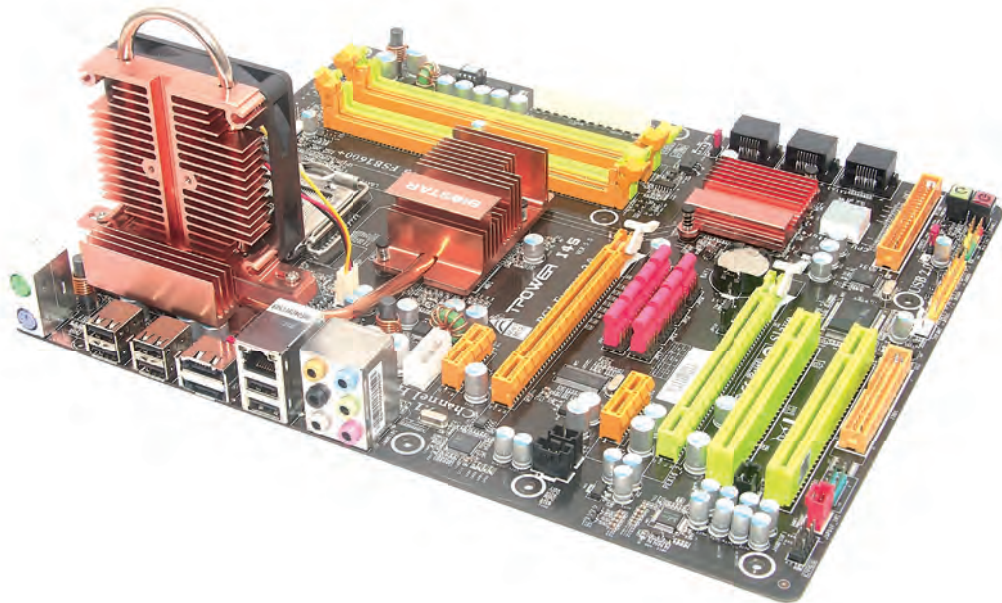
Force board. The only group of people who will be able to tell the difference between the boards are enthusiasts. Not because they are special, but because for them numbers count – nothing else. One of the boards would have to be better than the other. So if you have to choose a high-performance, stable motherboard for your gaming rig from a purely performance and stability point of view, you should look at a board that scores highly in the overclocking rankings and is generally favoured amongst enthusiasts.

Take the BIOSTAR T-Power I45 for example. Had it not been placed in the hands of a capable overclocker such as "Pt1t," nobody would have known that it is one of the best DDR2 motherboards ever produced for the LGA775 platform. Had it been given to any of the prominent gamers, it would have probably cost significantly more and not gathered much support, despite being a brilliant board.

Having said that, though, the competition for the overclocking crowd is only going to get fiercer for manufacturers. The best way to win over the crowds would be to produce great boards at affordable prices, rather than spend money marketing what can't possibly exist in the first place. Basically what I'm saying is that there's no such thing as a gaming motherboard. **NAG**



The truth of the matter is that there isn't a single motherboard on Earth that's better suited to gaming over another equivalently priced motherboard.





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## Reviewer's Diary



by Derrick Cramer

# Death of the high-range

**H**ELLO GAMERS, OVERCLOCKERS, PEDANTS and critics - glad to see you've survived another month in the mundane world we live in. It's time to take five, kick off your shoes and get into your comfortable chair as we take a look at Part 2 of building a gaming machine on a budget. Last month we flew over what not to focus on in little depth, because, well, it's not important. What is important, however, is the next ten minutes or so, so pay attention: this may be the turning point in your upgrade life.

Today's games are all about graphics, eye candy and the 'wow factor' that make you drool uncontrollably; sort of like watching a DB9 drive past your house without the feeling of hate you get for the lucky bastard driving it. In short, game performance is about graphics. Essentially then, the graphics card will be the component that leads to that second mortgage on your home. The saying, "Bigger is better," is true for modern gaming cards, and that applies to many aspects of it. Firstly, the amount of RAM the card has is important. In a world of high-textured games, 256MB is no longer enough; and the days of 512MB cards becoming the bare minimum are upon us. The next factor is the range of the card. In my experience, the lowest high-end card will often thrash a top-end midrange card by a good few points (the old 8800GT vs. the 8600 Ultra/GTS is a case in point). Prices are relatively close (in the grand scale of things), but the 8800GT beats the 8600GTS in the head with its own hands. Now unless your budget is rather low, you would need to look at spending around 25% to 40% of your money on a GPU - any less, and you will be disappointed by the results. You should be able to buy an 8800GT or 9600GT, which, while being far from new, will keep you happy.

Next up is RAM, which is in itself an irony and highly important... to a point. Gone are the days of 1GB of RAM being acceptable. Rather invest in 2GB of RAM or look at getting yourself a PSP. Now that the important bit is over (yes that was the entire important bit), we can focus on the not so important bit: speed.

DDR2's highest official standard was PC6400, or 800MHz, and is a pretty good indication of what you need. 800MHz RAM running at 5-5-5-15 is perfect for a gaming system, but RAM running at 1,066MHz is much better. They're so cheap it's rather laughable really, and while you notice virtually no difference, it's a nice comfort - sort of like a large person eating diet food, without the poor taste. For R550 you can pick up 2GB of generic 1,066MHz RAM with some change to spare, and there is no need to spend more than that for gaming purposes.

Lastly, and probably the most important after the GPU is the CPU. This is where the magic happens, and it's vital that you get the right CPU for your needs. Before I continue, repeat after me: quad core is bad; dual core is good. There is no need to waste money on a quad-core processor when most games don't support it, and the ones that do, don't benefit enough to justify the prices. My advice would be to buy the mid-range dual-core of the best CPU type on the market today. Coincidentally, that happens to be Intel, costing somewhere around R1,300.

Bear in mind that this is a guide for gaming on a budget, so if you can afford it, get the best you can get. If you can't, be smart. Do your research, get the opinions of those who know, and plan for future upgradeability. Next month will be something special. I can't promise anything, but it will make even the most hardcore gamer drool. **NAG**



Today's games are all about graphics, eye candy and the 'wow factor' that make you drool uncontrollably; sort of like watching a DB9 drive past your house without the feeling of hate you get for the lucky bastard driving it.





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# INTEL CORE 2 DUO E8600 EXTREME OVERCLOCKING

**IF YOU HAVEN'T HEARD ABOUT** the new Intel Core 2 Duo E8600 CPU, then pay close attention: no stepping or revision in the history of Intel CPUs has ever caused such a stir. If you are familiar with the improvements to overclocking the G0 stepping of Core 2 CPUs brought with them, we are here to tell you that this is nothing like that. The process improvements on Intel's 45nm dual-core CPUs are far more pronounced than we initially thought. The 45nm Core 2 CPUs were already considered excellent overclocking CPUs, with every single one of them - from the E8200 to the E8500 - reaching 4GHz at just over the default voltage of 1.25V. Some CPUs achieved such speeds at even lower voltages. As impressive as those were, the E8600 is a different beast altogether.

The main difference between the E8600 and the E8500 is obviously the default operating speed. With a 10x multiplier and a 333MHz external bus, the E8600 operates at an impressive 3.33GHz, which makes it the highest-clocked Intel CPU since the Pentium 4 NetBurst-based CPUs of early 2006.

On the E8600, we were able to boot into Vista at 4GHz with an amazingly low voltage of 1.15V, which is a sign of a CPU that has massive headroom in terms of overclocking.

As impressive as low-voltage overclocking is, we wanted to see how far it would overclock, and it seems that rumours and results on the Net are true. We set the FSB at 450MHz and used the default 10x multiplier. We were able to run benchmarks at 4.5GHz. Not only was the speed impressive, but so was the voltage with which the overclock was achieved. We only needed 1.35V (the BIOS voltage read 1.39V), which is less than what the original E6600 needed to reach 3.6GHz. While temperatures were high because of the high frequencies we were running, we pushed on and eventually stopped at 5GHz. The system was far from stable as we were

only able to capture a screenshot. However, since we were using an air cooler, the overclock was nothing short of spectacular.

We had a GIGABYTE EP45T-EXTREME motherboard, which we knew was a 600MHz FSB-capable motherboard, so we paired the two and with some assistance in the form of dry ice, we were able to push the CPU to an incredible 5.8GHz. With a Sapphire HD 4870 X2 clocked at a comfortable 850/1,000MHz on each core and some software tweaking, we broke the single-card 3DMark03 world record with a score of 103,516. We not only managed to break the world record, but we smashed every single South African overclocking record save for Super PI.

Impressed with the overclocking of the E8600, we felt that we could achieve even more. However, we needed something more exotic than dry ice. While -78.5°C is cold enough to get good clocks, we used liquid nitrogen, which is capable of reaching -198°C. We couldn't operate the CPU at such a temperature, but we were more than satisfied with the -130°C to -139°C we managed to keep the CPU at, courtesy of the ASUS Extreme Rampage motherboard. At such temperatures, and with just over 2.0V running through the CPU, we overclocked the CPU to 6.3GHz, which yielded a new Super PI 1M local record at 7.390 seconds.

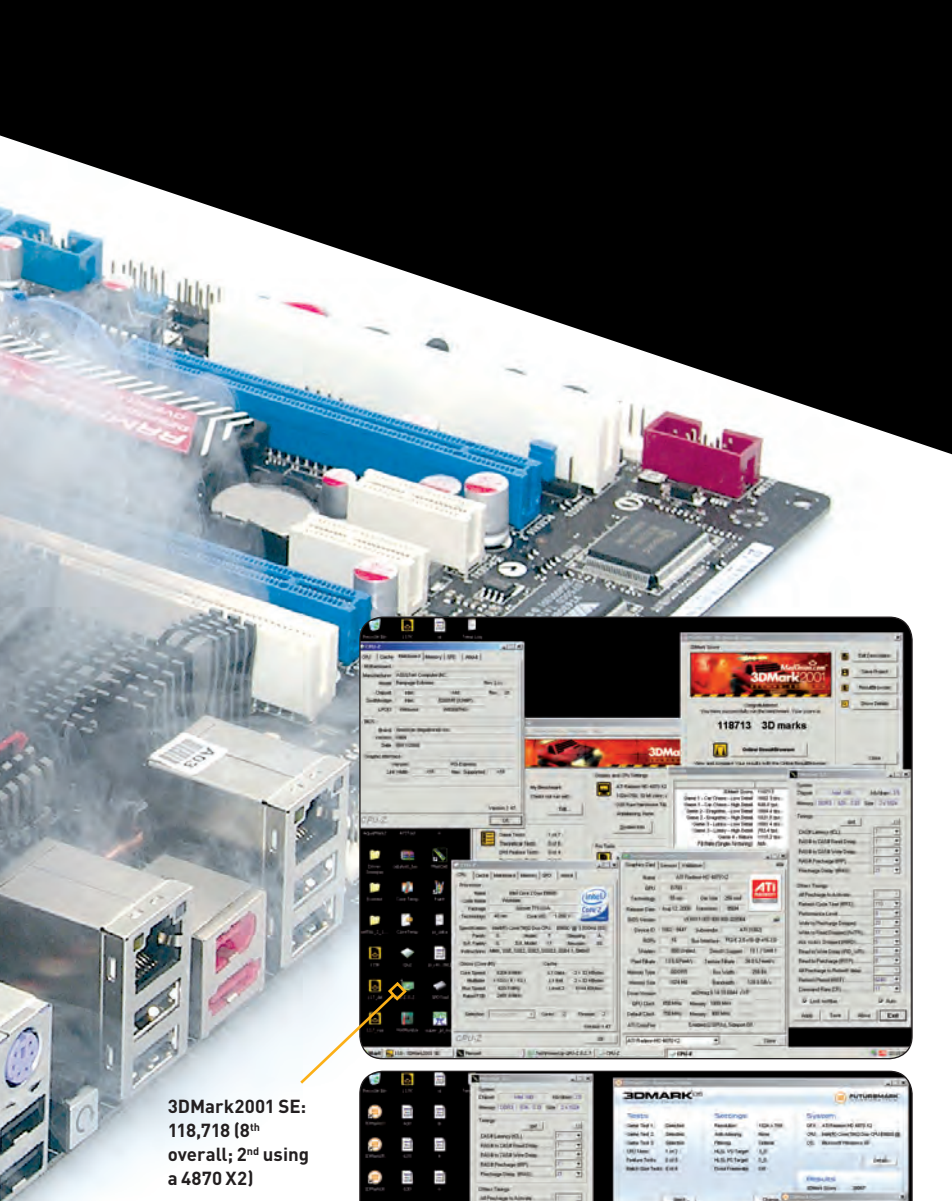
This speed was obviously too high for 3D benchmarks, but we managed to run all 3D benchmarks at above 6GHz, which resulted in new South African records in every benchmark, and Top 20 listings worldwide for South Africa in three separate benchmarks for the first time ever.

As fantastic as the E8600 was at 6GHz+, we believe that we have a CPU that is capable of some more world records. By the time you read this, another world record should be in place. **NAG**

Neo Sibeko

**We managed to run all 3D benchmarks at above 6GHz, which resulted in new South African records in every benchmark, and Top 20 listings worldwide for South Africa in three separate benchmarks for the first time ever.**

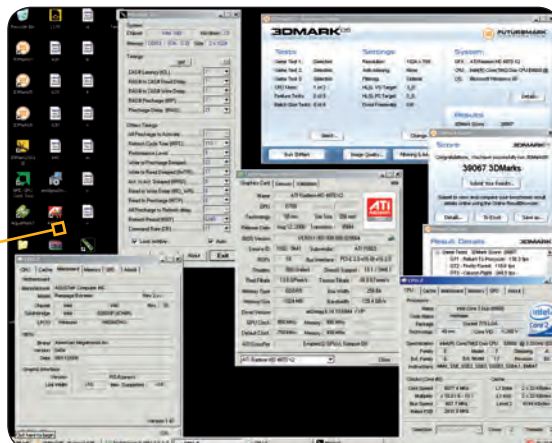




3DMark2001 SE:  
118,718 (8<sup>th</sup>  
overall; 2<sup>nd</sup> using  
a 4870 X2)

3DMark05:  
39,067 (17<sup>th</sup>  
overall)

AquaMark 3:  
358,337 (8<sup>th</sup>  
overall; 2<sup>nd</sup> using  
a 4870 X2)



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THX



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# AUDIO AT ITS BEST:

CREATIVE X-FI TITANIUM FATALITY + SENNHEISER PC 350

**P**CAUDIO IS ONE PART of the gaming or computing experience that is usually overlooked by many users. Gamers may care about features such as environmental audio and such, but for the most part, having such features isn't going to detract from the gaming experience as much as a low frame rate or delayed input might. In essence, it's great if the audio is of the highest quality, but not a train smash if it's a normal stereo signal at any reasonable sampling rate.

By now, most people are more than aware of what the Creative X-Fi range offers, which is almost everything that the PC audio industry has at its disposal (at least in consumer-level products). The latest version of EAX5.0, THX certification, Dolby Digital Surround, DTS surround, RAW multi-channel HD Audio, ASIO 2.0 support, SoundFont support, 3D MIDI and just about anything else you can imagine. All these features are supposed to somehow enrich your listening experience, provided that the audio signal you're listening to supports these technologies.

There are many games that support EAX and multiple speaker configurations, and these sound fantastic on the X-Fi as one would expect. As far as gaming is concerned, Creative, according to those in the know, produces the best gaming sound cards on the market - especially the X-Fi Titanium Fatal!ty sound card.

Despite Creative having been in some controversy not too long ago with their response to an independent driver developer for their parts, the drivers and all software included with the X-Fi Titanium are nothing short of impressive. Even though some features are not present in Vista, everything you could possibly need or use is available. That, however, isn't the most impressive part of the package. It's the presentation that makes everything very easy to find and configure. The interface does a brilliant job in hiding all the technicalities of the software, and allows you to make use of the sound card's abilities without being burdened with multiple screens or settings one is likely never to use.

The interface is clean and quite striking, fitting in well with Vista Aero. Of particular interest is the A/V receiver-like dashboard, which looks like the face of a NAD or Roland receiver. With a large volume knob in the middle, bass and treble knobs to the right, and the small THX certification logo on the bottom left, the interface really looks stunning. In terms of presentation, Creative scores full points as it has produced one of the most visually striking interfaces we have ever seen.

Past the cosmetics, although the actual sound quality isn't obvious at first, it will have a lasting impression on the listener. The audio signal is by far better than any other Creative product's. The response across the frequency range is nothing short of impressive. Some may find it too clinical, but the X-Fi executes it with a precision and accuracy that surpasses everything we have tested before. This level of audio fidelity will be hard to appreciate in a gaming context, but play a Super Audio CD, HD Audio CD or any other high-quality signal, and the X-Fi comes alive.

Of particular interest will be the environmental audio settings that can be applied to any active audio signal. We fired up Winamp and played back a song compressed

**SENNHEISER PC 350**  
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**CREATIVE X-FI  
TITANIUM FATALITY**

RRP→ R1,799 | Supplier→ Creative  
Website→ <http://us.creative.com>  
Brand→ Creative



## SPECS

|                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| <b>INTERFACE</b>    | PCI Express 1x   |
| <b>FEATURES</b>     | EAX5.0, OpenAL, 3D MIDI, SoundFont, ASIO 2.0, Direct Sound 3D, THX, Dolby Digital, DTS |
| <b>CONNECTIVITY</b> | Stereo mini-jacks, Optical in/out  |

## SCORE





## SPECS

|                           |                 |
|---------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>FREQUENCY RESPONSE</b> | 10-26,000Hz     |
| <b>IMPEDANCE</b>          | 150Ω            |
| <b>SENSITIVITY</b>        | 108dB           |
| <b>DISTORTION</b>         | < 0.1%          |
| <b>CONNECTIVITY</b>       | 2 x 3.5mm jacks |

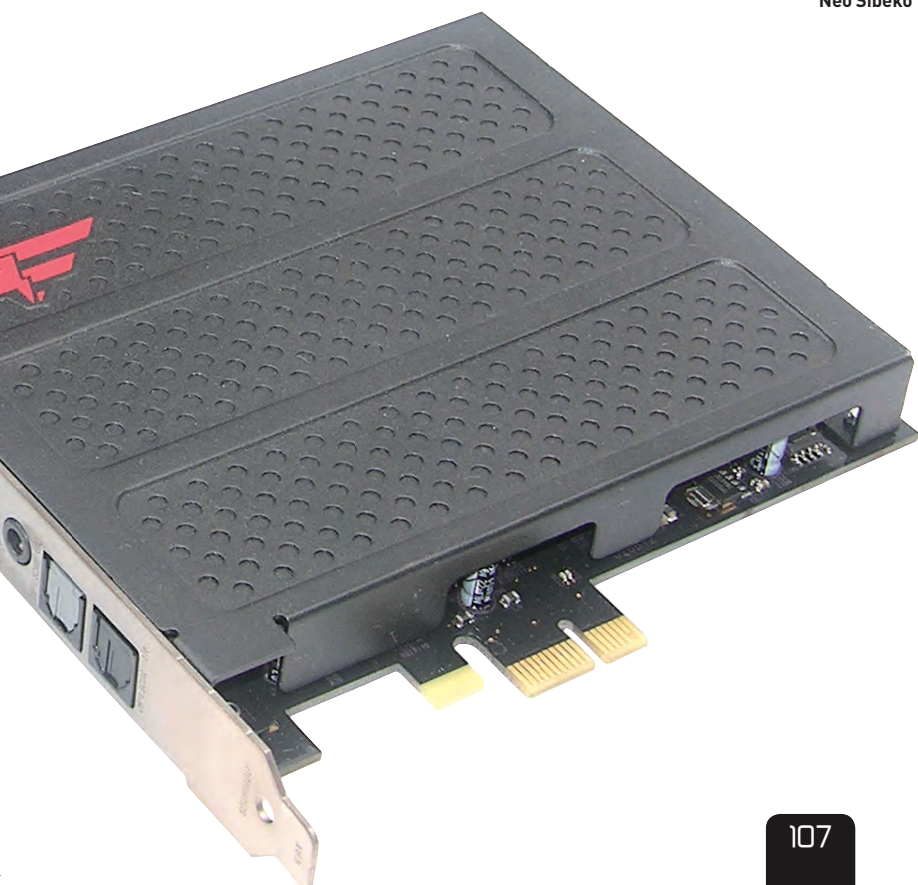
## SCORE



with WMA Pro at 48kHz, 727Kbps and selected the Jazz Club setting. The experience was nothing short of amazing. The heavy thud of the kick seemed to turn into the thump that can only be produced by a live set. Given that the original recording made use of live instruments, the setting seemed to restore what was lost in the translation from the studio session to CD. Besides adding new dimensions to the song, the altered signal lost nothing at all. There was no distortion or over-emphasis on any frequency, and at no point did the setting detract from the experience. Of course, this will not work for all music types, and in some instances can produce an undesired effect. However, when matched with the right recording, the music can take on a new life.

As a result of the X-Fi being a technically sound audio card, one could probably match it with any set of speakers and still have good audio. However, paired with the Sennheiser PC 350 headphones, one can be assured that the listening experience will be top notch. Sennheiser is well known for producing some of the best - if not the best - headsets available on the market, but it is very rare for one to listen with a set and feel that you're experiencing audio utopia. With the PC 350 set, you instantly know that there's not a movie, game or music recording the set cannot handle. With the Creative X-Fi powering the headphones, the match seems to be made in heaven. The PC 350 set handles everything the X-Fi throws at it. The headset includes a microphone (like all gaming headsets), but the magic is in the drivers, which so far are unmatched when it comes to gaming headsets. They may not support surround sound, but they more than make up for that in the reproduction of any stereo signal. In terms of audio reproduction, there isn't much on the market that can match the PC 350 set. There may be units that can produce louder bass, a more piercing tweeter or a combination of the two to produce a booming sound, but they won't come close to the PC 350 set. Although the PC 350 set is quite expensive, it's possibly the best set of headphones ever created. **NAG**

Neo Sibeko



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Support SDTV and 1080i HDTV  
Bundle software: Ulead MovieFactory



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# SAPPHIRE HD 4870 X2

**THINGS SEEM TO BE** going well for AMD lately with the release of the B3 revision Phenoms and 700 series of chipsets. AMD/ATI is also doing better, focusing on scalable graphic ASICs instead of the traditional GPU design.

We first saw this in the HD 3800 series, which was a capable family but not anything that would dethrone the competitor's graphics cards. However, with the release of the 3870 X2, it seemed that AMD/ATI was onto something. The scaling was better than expected, and most of all, the price was low enough to make it a viable alternative to what the competition had to offer at the time.

All was not well with the 3870 X2, however, as driver incompatibilities, stuttering and other problems made it a pretty difficult card to live with. There was no guarantee that performance scaling in the native CrossFire mode across the two GPUs would yield satisfactory results. Most of these were software issue, but the GPU itself was lacking texture units, despite heavy use of shaders in many of today's games.

We now have the 4870 X2, which, as you can imagine, packs two RV770 cores onto one board (coincidentally, the 4870 X2 is codenamed R700) each with a dedicated 1GB of GDDR5 memory. We may not like the way that board partners or even the IHVs sometimes interpret specifications, but given that the graphics card is doing more than just graphics these days, we can somewhat forgive the questionable specifications.

In the case of the 4870 X2, the card features a staggering 1,600 stream processors, 2GB of GDDR5 operating at 3.6GHz for a cumulative 230.4GB/sec of bandwidth, a 60Gpixel/sec texture rate, 32 render outputs and two teraflops of computing power. Nothing currently available comes close to matching the 4870 X2 in terms of raw power.

Since we are talking about a CrossFire configuration even though it's on a single PCB, the numbers don't tell the truth. The performance scaling of the card is linear and in line with two 4870s operating in a traditional CrossFire configuration. In some cases, it provides double the performance of a single 4870.

This kind of scaling not only gives it predictable performance gains, but in some cases it outpaces a normal CrossFire setup (such examples can be found in games running at very high resolutions or when excessive amounts of AA is used). Besides games performing better on the 4870 X2

than on any other graphics card (save for *Crysis* and *Lost Planet*, which run better on NVIDIA's GPUs), the 4870 X2 is probably the first truly viable dual-GPU card. The scaling is excellent and it is far more practical for most people than running two 4870 cards. It not only uses fewer slots, requires less power and is easier to manage, but it comes in at a fairly reasonable price given the amount of power the card has.



## SPECS

|                |  |
|----------------|--|
| <b>CORE</b>    | R700 (750MHz)                                    |
| <b>PROCESS</b> | 956 million gates<br>(55nm, low-K TSMC)<br>(x 2) |
| <b>MEMORY</b>  | 512-bit GDDR5<br>(3.6GHz 1.0ns)                  |
| <b>ROPS</b>    | 16 x 2   |
| <b>SHADERS</b> | 800 x 2  |

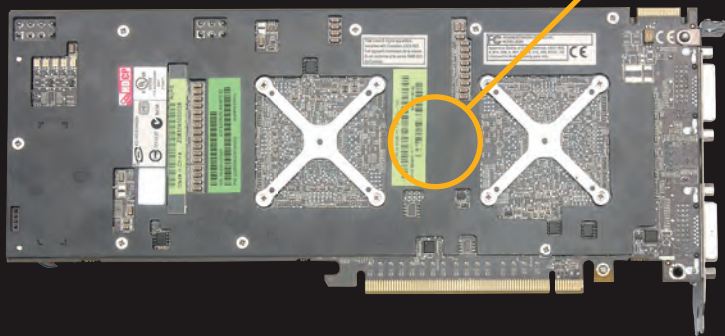
## SCORE







PLX CrossFire bridge-chip sits between the two RV770 cores



With all graphics cards, though, they are only as good as the drivers, and in this regard, AMD/ATI has made significant strides since the release of the HD 2900 in early 2007. CrossFire setup, overclocking and image quality settings are conveniently included in the Catalyst Control Center, but with the latest Catalyst drivers (8.8 at the time), the control panel is significantly faster than it used to be. In fact, it opens up as quickly as NVIDIA's ForceWare control panel - sometimes even faster.

However, the Catalyst Control Center's overclocking options are limited to 800MHz on the 4870 X2. Despite the fact that the card is capable of operating at 850MHz, without the use of some tricky procedures and third-party software, there's no way to make sure that you've overclocked your card past the 800MHz mark.

This is further complicated if you are using two 4870 X2s. As a result of the 4870 X2's dual-GPU configuration, the memory

and core clocks for each GPU are controlled separately. That means that you'll need to overclock each core separately. And to complicate matters even more, to clock the slave GPU past 800MHz, you will need to engage its 3D mode - only then can you set the 3D clock speeds.

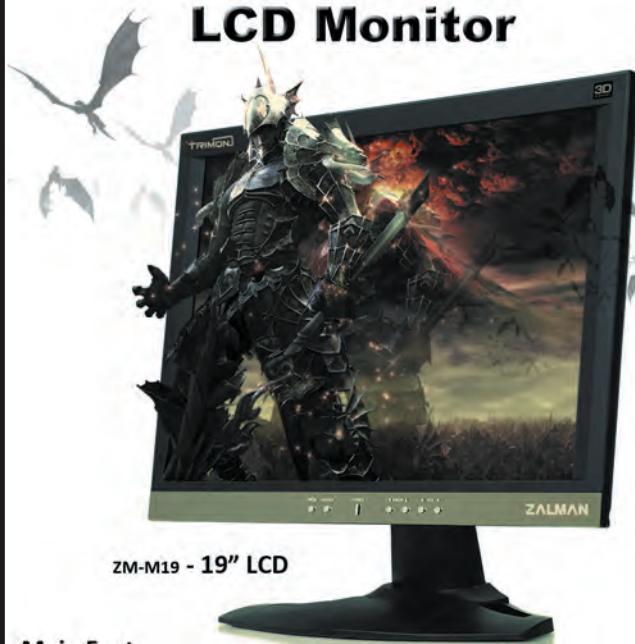
Nevertheless, the 4870 X2 is without a doubt the fastest graphics card on the market at factory settings, so overclocking may seem a little pointless for games (and even some synthetic tests, as the rest of the system is more likely to be a bottleneck in any situation).

The Sapphire HD 4870 X2 is a reference 4870 X2, but Sapphire includes a free copy of 3DMark Vantage. So, if you're looking for the ultimate graphics card money can buy, you cannot go wrong with the Sapphire HD 4870 X2. It is without a doubt the fastest and most impressive graphics card we have ever tested at NAG. **NAG**

Neo Sibeko

# ZALMAN

## Trimon 2D/3D Convertible LCD Monitor



ZM-M19 - 19" LCD

### Main Features

- \* Ultra clear 2D/3D imaging
- \* No ghost imaging
- \* Best choice for 3D media and 3D based applications
- \* Easy 2D/3D convertibility
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- \* Rapid response time and high contrast ratio
- \* Elegant design
- \* Rotatable (90°), Tilttable, High adjustable



ZM-M220W - 22" Wide LCD



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## SITECOM WL-308 WIRELESS 300N XR GIGABIT GAMING ROUTER

**C**LEARLY, THE DESIGNERS OF the Sitecom 300N XR Gaming Router are well versed in Douglas Adams trivia, as this router reminds one strongly of Hotblack Desiato's one-colour Sun-diving stunt ship, which the main protagonists find themselves quite irrevocably stuck in as it hurtles towards the giant flaming orb in question.

Sitecom's 300N XR Gaming Router is finished in a combination of high-gloss piano black and textured, soft plastic black for the sides, with a black button at the top, and black labels for the five inputs at the back. (They've even gone so far as to include an installation-guide CD, which is black all over and encased in a glossy-black cardboard envelope!)

Power it up, and the power and link LEDs provide some guidance at least: the orange light indicating power, with blue glows for link status.

Speaking of the rear connectors, squeezed

in between the three WLAN aerials are four Gigabit Ethernet ports and a Gigabit WAN port. This isn't an ADSL WLAN router, so you'll have to connect it to your existing ADSL router for Internet connectivity. You can choose to allow the Sitecom to manage the PPPoE authentication process itself, or act as a bridge to your existing, Internet-enabled network.

For your connection to the greater digital planet out there, the Sitecom 300N boosts performance through intelligent traffic optimisation. For the LAN/WAN, a system dubbed StreamEngine is embedded in the router with easily customisable rules giving bandwidth priority to an application - or more specifically, its port range. The company has even implemented similar bandwidth management on the WLAN connectivity (in this case the acronym changes to WISH [Wireless Intelligent Stream Handling]).

At first, we were sceptical about the claims of dramatically improved online

gaming experiences and so forth, since the architecture remains limited to the same 512Kbps ADSL line I usually play games on. However, the 300N surprised us by proving very effective. With a rule for *EVE: Online* traffic to get top priority, the performance of this MMORPG was noticeably improved: my regular 340ms ping on a shaped account dropped to just under 200ms - about the same kind of ping enhancement I get from switching to an unshaped account.

I saw a similar improvement in *DotA*, connecting to the local server for this popular title. Moreover, in both *DotA* and *EVE*, the 30% ping improvement is more than enough to transform the experience. In both, with a few microseconds too much network lag, you're constantly fighting off your back foot, reacting to attacks rather than instigating the aggression, so this improvement provided by networking equipment is well worth it if you're a committed online player. Racing





games are smoother with almost none of that unnerving 'jumping' of opponent cars as you wind your way between them, and FPS titles played online almost perform like LAN-based games.

Of course, you can prioritise other traffic as well, linked either to port ranges or specific applications, including the likes of VoIP, FTP transfers, and peer-to-peer; and via the customisable rule set, you can define any other application you want boosted.

Apart from the lower pings realised by optimising the flow of the gaming traffic, this router can't actually increase your 512Kbps connection to a 4MB/sec one. Your peak upload and download speeds will remain the absolute throughput limit. The 300N simply ensures that prioritised traffic flows uninterrupted and seems to make better use of the pipe available, constantly saturating it to its maximum limit if you have multiple sessions running.

The LAN and WLAN elements are fast, so your local network speeds, whether wired or wireless, should be exceptional if you have the requisite GbE ports on your desktop or a compatible 802.11n WLAN card in your notebook. And speaking of WLAN, there's only one button on that sexy black-on-black casing, and it's for enabling WPS (Wi-Fi Protected Setup). Just a push of this button will synchronise wireless security settings with other WPS-capable devices on the WLAN, securing your wireless environment without losing the WLAN links you want to have access to. Very handy indeed.

## SPECS

|                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| <b>PORTS</b>             | 4 x Gigabit Ethernet, 1 x Gigabit WAN                        |
| <b>EXTERNAL BUTTONS</b>  | 1 x one-touch WPS  |
| <b>STANDARD ANTENNAS</b> | 3 x 3dBi, detachable   |
| <b>WLAN</b>              | 802.11a/b, 802.11g, 802.11n Draft 2.0, WEP, WPA-PSK, WPA-EAP |

|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| <b>INTEGRATED FEATURES</b> | SIP firewall, VPN tunnelling, StreamEngine intelligent traffic optimisation, WISH WLAN prioritisation, customisable QoS rules, DMZ, Application Layer Gateway |
|----------------------------|---|

## SCORE



As for the HTTP-based management console, it isn't the best. Yes, it's functional and responds fairly quickly, but it's laid-out poorly and makes finding the settings you're looking for a little hard. They're there – you just need to figure out the right tab.

In summing up, the Sitecom 300N is an excellent addition to your arsenal if you're a regular online gamer, regardless of the actual virtual world of your choice. Its low-latency, StreamEngine-optimised WAN and smoking LAN and WLAN components give systems connected to it a tangible boost, instantly enhancing your fragging prowess. However, it is something of a pity that you still need an ADSL modem. An integrated ADSL modem would have been useful and made more sense. **NAG**

Russell Bennett



## Logitech® Outdoor Add-On Security Camera

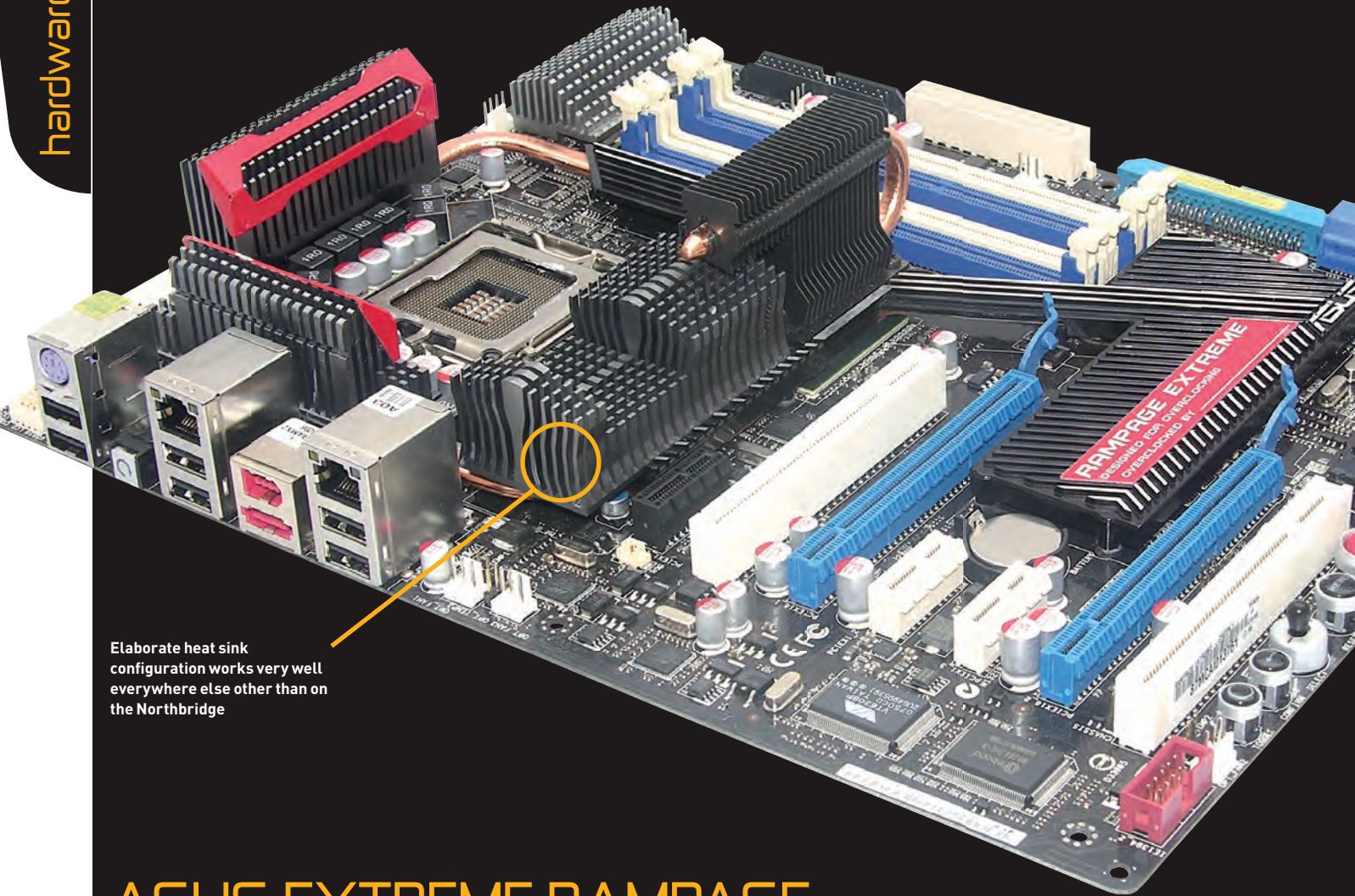
The Logitech® Outdoor Add-On Security Camera extends the power and reach of your Video Security Master System so you can easily monitor entrances and driveways. Easy setup gets you up and running fast for immediate viewing no new wires to run, no network configuration.

- Easy setup
- Weatherproof, waterproof design
- Flexible PC-viewing options
- Free remote viewing via the Internet



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**Durban Office:** Unit 20, Briar Park, 10 Nandi Drive, Durban, Tel: +27 31 564 3333, Fax: +27 86 679 3679





Elaborate heat sink configuration works very well everywhere else other than on the Northbridge

## ASUS EXTREME RAMPAGE

**O**VER THE LAST TEN months we have seen several motherboards that have been very impressive, leaving us feeling that they could be the best the LGA775 platform had to offer. With the ASUS Extreme Rampage, we again find ourselves convinced that this is truly the best LGA775 motherboard ever.

In fact, we would go as far as to say that the Extreme Rampage could very well be the best motherboard ever. There are many who would disagree and state that the Foxconn BLACKOPS, the old abit-IC7-Max or the DFI LanParty NF4 SLI-DR are the best boards ever made. Indeed, all these motherboards were great, but the Rampage Extreme is in a league of its own.

If you were thinking that this motherboard is for gaming, you'd be mistaken. While it may be true that it would be a perfect fit for any high-end gaming machine, the board isn't specifically designed to appeal to gamers. Just about everything one could imagine needing to cool has a heat sink, and the Northbridge can either be water-cooled using the included Fusion block, or you can opt for the more traditional air cooler.

Many manufacturers state that they have designed motherboards for overclocking, but ultimately do very little other than build a standard reference motherboard

and use varying cooling mechanisms on the Northbridge and Southbridge to distinguish themselves from the others. This in itself isn't an issue because there are so many ways a motherboard can be designed, considering that the LGA775 platform makes use of an off-die memory controller housed in the Northbridge. This obviously imposes several restrictions on motherboard design, and in general ends up with all motherboards being laid out in exactly the same way.

The same is true for the Extreme Rampage, but within those limitations, ASUS has done what can only be described as incredible. Besides an industry leading 16-phase power design, ASUS has added Fujitsu power-regulating chips not seen on any other motherboard on the market.

We used a Beta 0403 BIOS on the Extreme Rampage and installed the recently released Intel Core 2 E8600 CPU on the board. Upon booting the motherboard, we set the multiplier to 6x and the motherboard frequency to 500MHz. We changed nothing else in the BIOS other than those two settings, and the motherboard booted into Windows running hours of benchmarks without any issues.

Given that 500MHz is no longer considered an impressive FSB overclock,

we set about doing what is generally considered difficult - if not impossible - on X48 motherboards. We went back into the BIOS and increased the FSB frequency from 500MHz to 600MHz. We did not expect the motherboard to POST, let alone boot into Windows, but to our disbelief the motherboard booted into Windows and was

**NAG**  
HARDWARE



**NAG**  
DREAM  
MACHINE



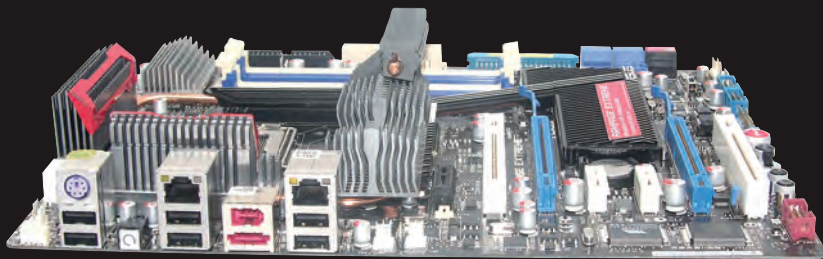
### SPECS

|                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| <b>CHIPSET</b>      | Intel X48 + ICH9R  |
| <b>MEMORY BANKS</b> | 4 x DDR3 184-pin (4x2GB/8GB Maximum)                                     |
| <b>CPU SUPPORT</b>  | Intel Core 2 Duo, Core 2 Quad, Core 2 Extreme                            |
| <b>SLOTS</b>        | 2 x PCI-E 16x, 2 x PCI-E 1x, 2 x PCI 2.2                                 |
| <b>CONNECTORS</b>   | 8 x SATA 3Gb/sec, 6 x USB 2.0, 2 x Gigabit Ethernet, 1 x FireWire, eSATA |

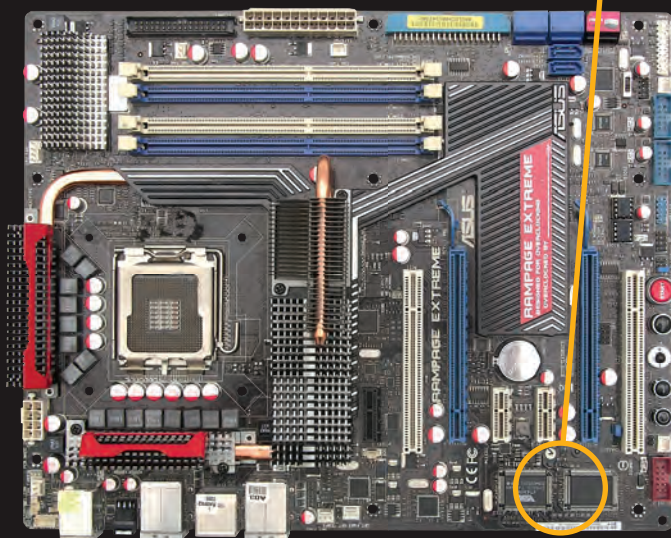
### SCORE







Two BIOS chips with the option to boot from either one at any time



just as stable as it was at 500MHz, doing several loops of 3DMark06 without issue.

We did a double-take to make sure that the motherboard is indeed based on the X48 chipset, as this kind of overclocking is unheard of for any motherboard and most certainly not for a board based on the X48 chipset.

Increasing the memory operating frequency by adjusting the memory divider resulted in instability, but that was expected as the relationship between FSB speed and memory speeds is a very complicated one that has very little tolerance. Unfortunately, a low memory divider and a high FSB don't result in added stability as had previously been the case with 965, P35 or 975 boards. On the X48, and particularly on the Extreme Rampage, the low RAM multiplier and high FSB speed produce immense strain on the MCH, which may result in one setting much higher MCH voltages than would be normally required for a high memory operating speed.

That means that to get the most from this board and its high frequencies, one has fewer RAM divider options than what would appear to be available in the BIOS. For example, running a 2.66 RAM multiplier with the FSB set at 600MHz resulted in a RAM frequency of 1,596MHz, which is well under

the RAM's operating speed. The internal adjustments, including wait states, latency management and such, required in the MCH make it an unfavourable setting not only in performance, but in stability as well.

The next available setting is the 3.33 RAM multiplier. However, this means that the RAM speed would be 2GHz, which may be more than some sets of RAM can tolerate. Combine this with the complex relationship between the RAM timings, RAM frequency, FSB and performance level, and getting the best from this board at such high speeds can prove to be a time-consuming affair and sometimes frustrating.

After hours of experimenting, we managed to get it right, and with the help of some liquid nitrogen on the CPU, we were able to validate a 660MHz FSB on the board and run our 1.8GHz-rated RAM at an impressive 2.1GHz (C17-7-7-21 1T).

The ASUS Rampage is a very easy motherboard to live with, but if you want to run it close to the edge, you will have to work hard. However, should you get it configured correctly and cold enough, you can get even better performance than we were able to. As far as we are concerned, the ASUS Extreme Rampage is the best motherboard ever built. **NAG**

Neo Sibeko



## Logitech Indoor Video Security Add-On Camera

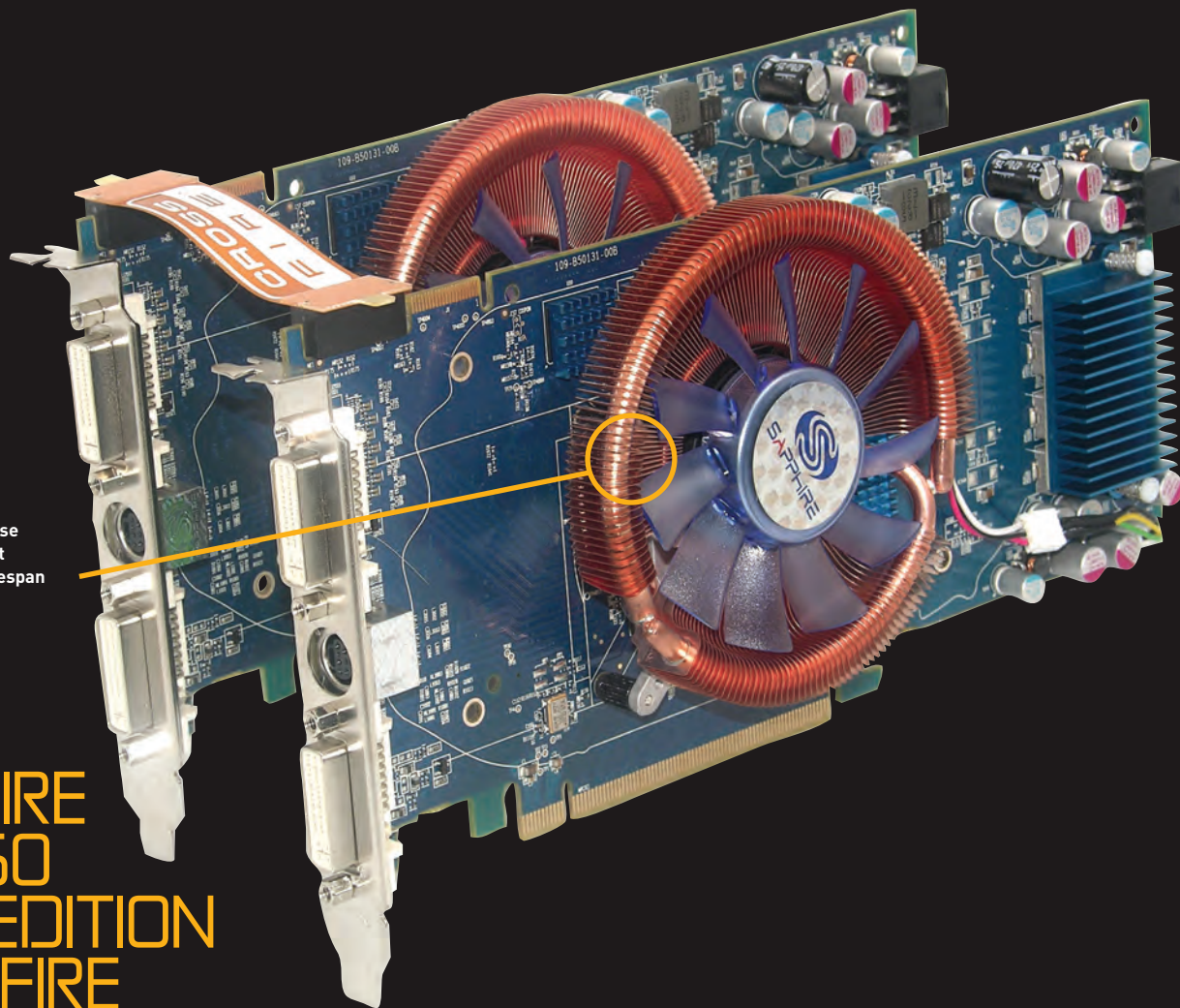
The Logitech® Indoor Add-On Security Camera extends the power and reach of your Video Security Master System so you can easily monitor your home or business. Easy setup gets you up and running fast for immediate viewing no new wires to run, no network configuration.

- Easy setup
- Free remote viewing via the Internet
- Flexible PC-viewing options
- Motion-activated cell-phone\* and e-mail alerts



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The custom coolers on these Toxic cards mean less heat generated and a longer lifespan

## SAPPHIRE HD 4850 TOXIC EDITION CROSSFIRE

**LIFE AS WE KNOW** it is filled with pairs, and every corner holds another. Think of two peas in a pod, a couple getting married, a CrossFire configuration in a new gaming system. The latter has become more common in gaming machines due to online reports of the performance benefits adding a second card to your system brings, and no card is wearing its performance on its sleeve more so than the AMD/ATI 4850. With performance claims over that of the current fastest single GPU solution, the NVIDIA 280GTX at a price point much easier on the wallet, CrossFire 4850s could well be the new price/performance champion. So let's take a closer look, shall we?

Being the Toxic edition, the two 4850s we were sent for review each comes with custom Zalman coolers, which address the one crippling point of the 4850 – heat. Thankfully, heat is an issue of the past with the stylish copper cooler accentuated by the blue PCB and RAM chip coolers, bringing performance as well as style to your gaming machine. It has to be said that while one looks impressive on its own, two just make your case look like a monster – a monster in a rather well-fitting tux. So kudos to Sapphire on cooling and looks, but when it really comes down to it, can these already impressive cards meet and exceed performance expectations?

Onto benchmarking, and the results will surprise even the most well-educated benchers. The nature test of 3D Mark 01 is a good indication of a card's performance, stressing the GPU and handing the highest

frames to the card with the most grunt. Even in a benchmark usually favouring NVIDIA, the CrossFire 4850s come out ahead of the 280GTX, albeit not by much. Futuremark's new Vantage benchmark was a bit of a mixed bunch, with the 280GTX edging the lead in the performance preset, the cards virtually on par at the high preset, and the 4850 winning by a nose with the Extreme preset. The only advantage the 280GTX has is the 1GB of memory it has compared to the 512MB available to the 4850s, even in CrossFire. This shows in games like *Crysis* where the 280GTX takes the lead, especially at higher resolutions with post-processing effects such as AA and AF enabled. Gamers with a large budget considering either of these options will no doubt be running games on large screens with higher resolutions, making the 1GB on the 280GTX appealing. The gap at lower resolutions is close enough to warrant the money saved when purchasing the two 4850s for CrossFire. So if performance is relatively close, other considerations need to come into play. Often you will find games have compatibility issues with a CrossFire setup, one such game being *TrackMania Nations Forever*. No matter what the setting, arbitrary white lines appear across the track permanently which, at high speeds, becomes very annoying. This is just one of the many problems facing CrossFire/SLI solutions, although in their defence, as newer drivers come out these problems are being fixed bit by bit, resulting in a far better game experience than previous versions

of CrossFire allowed. With all this said and done, the price saving on the 4850s make them a viable alternative to the current leader of single GPU cards, but one cannot help but wonder, is all this power worth it. A single card will drain far less from your power supply. It will also offer less incompatibility with games, and generate less heat in your case. The final verdict then on the CrossFire 4850s is simple: if you need the performance to game at ultra-high resolutions, and the 280GTX is not within your budget, save some money and get the CrossFire solution. However, if this performance is not paramount, a cheaper single card solution such as a 4870 would be well within your consideration. **NAG**

Derrick Cramer

### SPECS

|                |   |
|----------------|---|
| <b>CORE</b>    | RV770 [675MHz]                          |
| <b>PROCESS</b> | 956 million gates<br>(55nm, low-K TSMC) |
| <b>MEMORY</b>  | 256-bit GDDR3<br>(2.3GHz 0.8ns)         |
| <b>ROPS</b>    | 16                                      |
| <b>SHADERS</b> | 800                                     |

### SCORE





# MSI P45 PLATINUM

RRP→ TBA | Supplier→ Pinnacle Micro  
Website→ [www.pinnacle.co.za](http://www.pinnacle.co.za) | Brand→ MSI

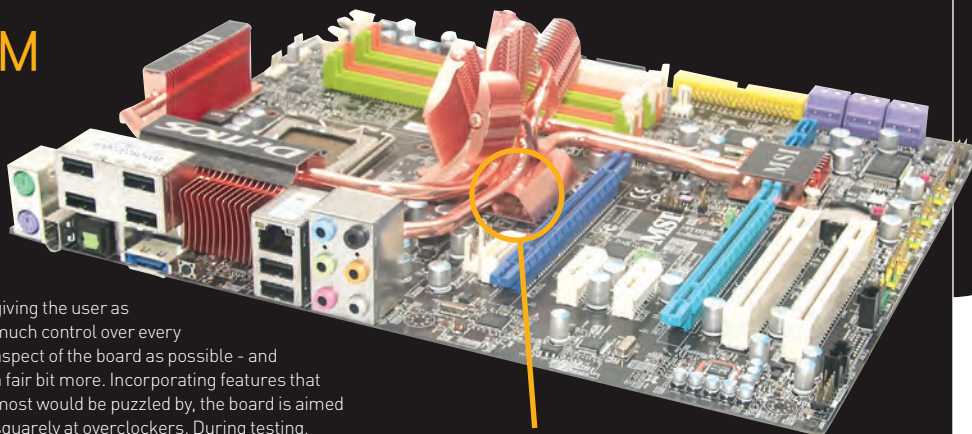
**WHEN WE TALK ABOUT** beauty, nature comes to mind. Flowers, rainbows, sunsets - these are just a few beautiful things that surround us in life. However, when we talk about cars, buildings, pictures, and the MSI P45 Platinum, the latter has to be at the top of our list.

A black PCB with an orange-and-green colour scheme hosts MSI's showpiece. A stylish - if overly complex - cooling system covers the Northbridge, Southbridge and power regulators, connected by the bane of the motherboard world, heat pipes. When powered, the board lights up with an array of blue, red, and green LEDs, positioned not only to look good, but to give the user feedback on what the board is up to. Because of this, the board requires extra power in the form of a four-pin Molex connector, but once you've seen the pretty lights, it doesn't really feel like a waste. Even better than the pretty lights is the board's performance. Though I was sceptical about this board, my perception changed after a few hours of solid gaming: without any active cooling on the complicated heat-pipe system, the board remained rock solid. The real test, however, would be in the MSI's BIOS and how well the board would overclock. Being based on the P45 chipset means that this board should be capable of a rather high FSB in the region of 600MHz+. When confronted by the vast array of BIOS options, it was clear that MSI had gone all out,

giving the user as much control over every aspect of the board as possible - and a fair bit more. Incorporating features that most would be puzzled by, the board is aimed squarely at overclockers. During testing, however, the board had compatibility issues with the RAM we were using, and refused to reach 1MHz higher than its stock values. Do not let this put you off: the board is capable of amazing things, and with compatible RAM should reach the 600MHz mark with ease. The deciding factor is the build quality of the MSI P45 Platinum, and the overall attention to detail that has been missing in boards of late. There is simply nothing not to like about this board: it covers all the bases well, leaving you well aware that it will be a solid purchase.

If you are looking for a new motherboard and want something to make your mates drool; if you're on the prowl for a motherboard that'll give you added control over your overclocking adventures; or if you are in the market simply because it is upgrade time once again, you can't go wrong with the MSI P45 Platinum. **NAG**

Derrick Cramer



The cooling system employed by the P45 Platinum keeps the chipset running cool and quiet, even after hours of gaming

## SPECS

|                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| <b>CHIPSET</b>      | Intel P45  |
| <b>MEMORY BANKS</b> | 4 x 184-pin DDR2 (Max. 8GB)                                      |
| <b>CPU SUPPORT</b>  | Intel Core 2 Duo, Core 2 Quad, Core 2 Extreme                    |
| <b>SLOTS</b>        | 2 x PCI-E 1x, 2 x PCI-E 16x, 2 x PCI 2.2                         |
| <b>CONNECTORS</b>   | 6 x USB 2.0, 8 x SATA 3Gb/sec, Gigabit Ethernet, FireWire, eSATA |

## SCORE



hardware

NOTHING CAN STOP  
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PLAYSTATION 3

Wii

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**IMPACT!**  
TOTAL NONSTOP ACTION WRESTLING

16+

Live the hype crushing intensely one fight at a time with TNA, Total Nonstop Action. All the antics, all the energy and all the drama come smashing onto your console. Featuring Kurt Angle, Sting, Samoa Joe and Christian Cage, if you're not seeing stars, you'll be one.



# OCZ EQUALIZER LASER GAMING MOUSE

RRP → R399 | Supplier → Syntech  
Website → [www.syntech.co.za](http://www.syntech.co.za) | Brand → OCZ Technology

**WHEN I FIRST LAID** eyes on this particular rodent, I was struck by its looks. The unit we received for review is a slightly metallic blue with black trim, and its symmetry is quite pleasing to the eye. That aesthetic carries over into the palm of one's hand, with the unit sitting quite comfortably, especially if you are used to a conventional mouse shape. This means that it is laterally symmetrical, which is not necessarily as ergonomic as it could be, but some gamers prefer mice that are minimalist. This mouse is for right-handed players. Although the overall casing is symmetrical, the buttons are not, meaning that the side buttons are inaccessible to the left-handed. Beneath the side/thumb buttons is a rubberised grip, which feels really good.

The scroll wheel lights up when the mouse is plugged in. What is less common is the fact that it lights up in different colours, with each colour representing a resolution (DPI setting), which is adjusted by a button underneath the scroll wheel. Sadly, the latter is somewhat lagging behind the times, as it has no left/right tilt function. Another aspect that concerns me is the longevity of the Equalizer's 'feet': they are four small round pads at the corners. While this is perfect for an office mouse, gaming subjects a mouse to heavier wear, so I am a bit dubious about this model's longevity in this respect.



During play, I found this mouse a little 'twitchy': it overreacted to minute movements, and I found my crosshairs bouncing around the screen. However, turning down the mouse's resolution made it too slow for my liking. Finding a middle ground was quite tricky using the software driver - which is also quite minimalist, and not heavy on features, but offers the essential basics - and it never yielded a perfect result for me. However, some players prefer a 'twitchy' action like this, so as it ultimately comes down to personal preference, you are advised - if in the market for a gaming mouse - to try before you buy. You'll either love it or hate it. **NAG**

Alex Jelagin



This orange 'Triple Threat' button delivers a 'triple-click'. This can be handy in some games, and can also double as a double-click button in day-to-day Windows usage (though, sometimes, that one click too many can be an issue, so experimentation is necessary)

## SPECS

|                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| <b>MAX RESOLUTION</b>   | 2,500dpi   |
| <b>RESOLUTION STEPS</b> | 6 (from 400 to 2,500)  |
| <b>SENSOR</b>           | Dual laser   |
| <b>WARRANTY</b>         | 6 years  |
| <b>OTHER</b>            | Triple Threat' button; gold-plated USB connector (notebook version also available) |

## SCORE



# PSP UMD REPLACEMENT CASE

RRP → R51.30 | Supplier → UMDCases [011] 758-5991  
Website → [www.umdcases.co.za](http://www.umdcases.co.za) | Brand → UMD Cases

**THIS WAS QUITE POSSIBLY** the most arbitrary item to fall into my hands, and I started questioning the practicality of the UMD replacement covers before the packaging was even open. Who would honestly buy pretty coloured pieces of plastic to hold discs that, when in use, are not visible? Not having a PSP myself, I borrowed a friend's, and set about trying to understand the logic behind the UMD replacement case. After a few minutes of pondering life with and without a UMD case, it hit me. This is quite possibly the single best item to have for your PSP. Why you say? Picture the scenario - your dad/girlfriend/someone you can't get angry at, sits on your UMD disc and cracks the case open. Now it's not as simple as clipping the disc back into the case, because once broken, nothing short of some skilled super gluing will revive your supposedly lost games. This is where the brilliance of the UMD replacement case shines. Simply pop the disc into the casing, snap it shut, and go on with your daily life. It really is that simple: a R400 game saved by a piece of coloured plastic. Using the cover is hassle free, and you won't know the

difference once you're gaming. The only negative, however, that comes to mind would be at times, with the darker coloured cases, the title of the disc is hidden, which could become annoying if you have many games and need to pay close attention to find the one you want in a hurry. The colour scheme however could quite easily solve this, as you can now colour code your PSP games according to UMD case colours. When all is said and done, the UMD replacement case is a very affordable, functional product that every PSP owner should invest in, just in case. **NAG**

Derrick Cramer



## SPECS

|             |   |
|-------------|---|
| <b>PROS</b> | Cheap<br>Rather useful                                    |
| <b>CONS</b> | Dark-coloured cases could hamper vision of the disc title |

## SCORE





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# MOVIE NEWS

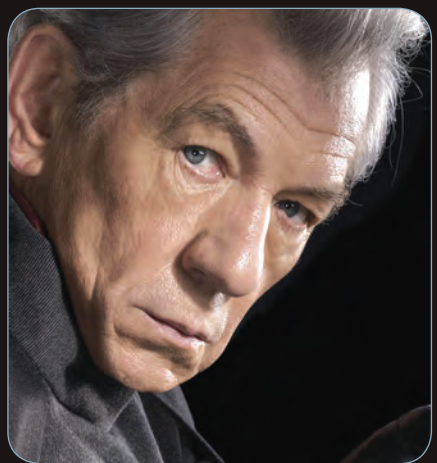
## ORIGIN OF MYSTERY

**F**OLLOWING THE SUCCESS OF the *X-Men* film series that began in 2000, Marvel likely realised the great potential of cinema as an outlet for the super mutant group's tales. The rich, detailed pasts of almost all members of the X-Men universe would make a great story, but ultimately Marvel settled on Wolverine and Magneto as the spin-off stars for 2009.

Entitled *X-Men Origins: Wolverine*, the film is being directed by Gavin Hood – South African born actor and the writer and director behind local hit *Tsotsi* – and follows the early years of Logan's twisted past, as portrayed by oh-so-well-suited Hugh Jackman. Also jumping into the action is Ryan Reynolds as regenerating assassin Deadpool, Liev Schreiber as Wolfy's nemesis Sabretooth and Taylor Kitsch as Gambit (finally!). Logan will seek revenge on pre-Sabretooth Victor Creed for the death of his

girlfriend, run into all sorts of trouble and ultimately sign up for the dreaded Weapon X program.

Due out shortly after *Wolverine* is *X-Men Origins: Magneto*, finally giving the misunderstood supervillain his 90 minutes of fame and a chance to tell his side of the story. Written and directed by David S. Goyer – the penman behind countless superhero films like the recent *Batman* films, *Jumper* and the *Blade* series, as well as the upcoming film of *The Flash* – and starring Ian McKellen as Eric Lensherr, the film explores the deep, dark past of the metal-twisting mutant known as Magneto after his experiences in a Nazi concentration camp we got a chance to see briefly in the first *X-Men* film. Expect a whole host of appearances from plenty of familiar and not-so-familiar X-Men, including a young telepathic Charles Xavier determined to bring peace and unity to mutants and humans alike.



## GHOSTBUSTERS TOLD TO HOLD ITS HORSES

PS3 and Blu-ray-player owners (all three of you) are likely to be disappointed – the long-promised, digitally re-mastered BD versions of the *Ghostbusters* films have suffered a setback, one which has almost nothing to do with the films themselves. Initially set to be released in time for Christmas, the re-releases have had their shipping dates pushed back to “when the game is done” to encourage fans to purchase the (admittedly awesome) film/game bundle, which includes both films and the PS3 version of the upcoming game. Unfortunately, publisher woes have caused a few hiccups in the game's development over the last few months, likely meaning it could be anywhere up to a year until we see this timeless gem hit the market.



## THE ROAD IS LONG

Cormac McCarthy's compelling post-apocalyptic novel *The Road* will be forever immortalised on film thanks to the direction of relatively unknown John Hillcoat. Starring Viggo Mortenson as “the father”, *The Road* follows the journey of a man and his son through the ash-covered, hopeless world of a decimated future America. Joining the star is “the son” Kodi Smit-McPhee, Charlize Theron as “the wife”, as well as cameo roles by Guy Pearce, Robert Duvall and Michael K. Williams. Expect to be deeply moved by this story of faith, love and survival instincts towards the end of November, if we're lucky enough to coincide with the international release date.







## MAX PAYNE'S ETERNAL SUFFERING

While I think it's safe to say 99% of the world saw this coming, *Max Payne*'s director, John Moore, is agghast at the MPAA ratings board's inclination to slam a potentially sales-damaging R-rating on the film. Moore claims the Motion Pictures Association of America said the film just "feels R", to which Moore responded, "so does *Dark Knight*". He complains that the MPAA is just sucking up to Warner Bros. (his exact words were a little cruder), and it's not hard to see why he'd think so. *Dark Knight*'s highly-contested 13 age restriction ensured countless mini-teens stampeded the cinemas on release week, a favour which the currently unrated *Max Payne* film may be without from day one.



## ASK ANY RACER...

**PAUL WALKER, VIN DIESEL**, Michelle Rodriguez and Jordana Brewster are back for yet another *Fast and the Furious* movie. This time, Brian O'Conner (Walker) is out of lockup and ready to hit the streets with his old pal Dom Terreto (Diesel) to take down a nasty heroin-smuggling ring the only way they know how – by racing pimped-out muscle cars. Expect more over-the-top high-speed chases, take-downs and hijacking than ever before with director Justin Lin – the man responsible for *Tokyo Drift*'s jaw-dropping street racing scenes.



## COME GET SOME!

Hold onto your sensitive bits, this news might just floor you – Scott Faye, the producer behind the *Max Payne* film, is gathering up allies to put together a *Duke Nukem* movie; we're not even kidding! Reported as saying "I'm working diligently at making a *Duke Nukem* movie scenario that will live up to the character and its import in the videogame world", Faye doesn't seem to really understand what he's getting himself into. He's apparently working closely with 3D Realms' Scott Miller (who, we're told, does actually exist) to produce a *Duke* flick that not only honours the old series and "upcoming" games, but also stands on its own as a genuinely entertaining film. While we may be bursting at the seams with poor vaporware puns about this announcement,



we're prepared to hold on for a few months to see if Faye manages to get this off the ground, as he's still in the very early pre-production phase.

# DVDs for the fans...



**The Incredible Hulk**  
(2 DVD)  
Available from 13 Oct



**The Simpsons**  
Season 11 (4 DVD)  
Available from 13 Oct



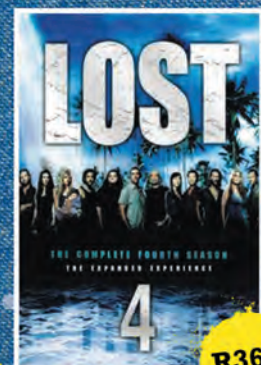
**Battlestar Galactica**  
Season 4 - Part 1 (4 DVD)  
Available from 13 Oct



**Two And A Half Men**  
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# UNTRACEABLE

**Director:** Gregory Hoblit  
**Cast:** Diane Lane | Colin Hanks | Erin Carufel | Billy Burke | Joseph Cross | Mary Beth Hurt  
**Genre:** Thriller  
**Age Restriction:** 16 (LV)  
**Run Time:** 97 minutes  
**Score:** ★★★

**H**ACKERS, INTERNET WEIRDOES, PORN-SITE admins and other dysfunctional individuals out there, rejoice. This is a film about you sick people. We hate you and your kind. There's no place for sickos like you. *Untraceable* tells the story of a division within the FBI, dedicated to finding and catching criminals operating on the Internet. Yes, no one has time for disturbed individuals like you. This film takes a poignant look at

the inner-workings of this special FBI unit. Jennifer Marsh (Diane Lane) is a veteran FBI operative, who has seen it all. Well, not quite. Welcome to the frontlines of the war against cybercrime. In *Untraceable*, Marsh is tasked with investigating and tracking down a highly disturbed serial killer, who via an untraceable and unstoppable Website publishes grisly live footage of his 'accomplishments' (read, snuff films). The mastermind behind this Website kills more people as his site's picking up more viewers and hits. So, more watchers and more people die. Marsh becomes involved in a cat-and-mouse game with Mr Serial Killer, and she has to race against time to track down and stop the killer before she becomes the next victim. *Untraceable's* plot is well thought out, albeit a bit predictable (after all, this has been done before



in other films). Suspense is the name of the game, and viewers will be kept on the edge as Marsh tries to find the mastermind behind the Website.

**Nati de Jager**

# DEFINITELY, MAYBE

**Director:** Adam Brooks  
**Cast:** Ryan Reynolds | Abigail Breslin | Rachel Weisz | Elizabeth Banks | Isla Fisher  
**Genre:** Romantic Comedy  
**Age Restriction:** 10 (L)  
**Run Time:** 112 minutes  
**Score:** ★

**R**YAN REYNOLDS STARS IN this romantic comedy written and directed by Adam Brooks – the penman behind the *Bridget Jones 2* screenplay. Will Hayes (Reynolds) is facing a divorce when his daughter (played by 12 year-old Abigail Breslin) asks him to tell her the story of how he met her mother in an attempt to rekindle their lost love and save the marriage. Hayes proceeds to tell his daughter the family-safe version of not just how he met his wife, but how he spent his years climbing the political ranks in New York and scooped up a handful of women while he was at it, one of whom is his soon-to-be ex-wife.

The story is cheap and clichéd, filled with



Hollywood 'moments' that are neither romantic nor comedic. The closest thing the film gets to interesting is the detective work required to figure out who Hayes married in the end, but sitting through 112 minutes to confirm your suspicions feels more punishing than rewarding, even if you were right. Playing the roles of Hayes's love interests are Rachel Weisz, Elizabeth Banks and Isla Fisher, all of whom have decent acting ability, but



find themselves stunted by the shallowness of their roles in the story.

Extra features are decent, comprising of audio commentary, a production documentary and deleted scenes, but anyone brave enough to sit through more film than necessary to understand the plot has either missed the point of home entertainment or suffers from masochistic tendencies.

**Geoff Burrows**

# 10,000 BC

**Director:** Roland Emmerich  
**Cast:** Steven Strait | Camilla Belle | Cliff Curtis  
**Genre:** Action Adventure  
**Age Restriction:** 13 (V)  
**Run Time:** 104 minutes  
**Score:** ★★★

**I'M A SUCKER FOR** historical/fantasy epics like *Braveheart*, *300*, *Troy* and *Lord of the Rings*, so I had high expectations for *10,000 BC*. Unfortunately, those expectations were not met. In truth, it's not terrible, but on the other hand, it's far from great or even good. It falls securely in the realm of 'average'. Following a surprisingly well-educated pseudo-caveman named D'Leh on his journey to reunite with his kidnapped love interest, the film does offer the chance to see a few not-quite-unique, but interesting locales along the way. Mammoths, sabre-toothed tigers and birds I wouldn't want to cross paths with are all on display, but it's not enough to save viewers from the boredom sure



to be induced by the film. The acting ranges from decent to downright horrible, the visuals are often ruined by shoddy CG work and the film's plot did a horrible job of keeping me interested. The film is safe to watch if you have absolutely nothing else to do, but be warned: chances are, you're going to



wish you'd found a better way to spend that hour and forty minutes. On the disc you'll find a feature on the locations and animals seen in the film, a piece on how historic events influenced the film's story, a few deleted scenes and an alternate ending.

**Dane Remendes**



# FOOL'S GOLD

**Director:** Andy Tennant  
**Cast:** Matthew McConaughey | Kate Hudson  
 | Donald Sutherland | Alexis Dziena | Ewen  
 Bremner | Ray Winstone | Kevin Hart  
**Genre:** Comedy  
**Age Restriction:** 10 (LV)  
**Run Time:** 108 minutes  
**Score:** ★★★★★



**F**OR AN AVERAGE AND clichéd movie, *Fool's Gold* is a treasure chest of fun (sorry). The story sees Matthew McConaughey teaming up with his recently divorced wife (Kate Hudson) to search for treasure in the Caribbean. Filling out the predictable plot is a bad guy and his goons who also want in on the action, a wealthy businessman and his brain-dead daughter, a competing treasure hunter and two gay chefs. While this might all sound like a recipe for disaster, it's not, and the movie manages to come off as extremely likable, funny and entertaining. The flow of the story and action is also well handled and the pace doesn't let up for a second. Despite being full of everything you've seen before, the actors all look like they were having fun while making the movie, and this translates back down to some original comedy, interesting characters and good-natured entertainment.

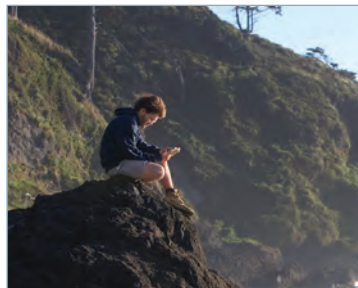
In terms of features, the DVD is a little weak with just a short gag reel and a feature on making the movie. They could have added

a little more here on treasure hunting and perhaps a documentary on the real story behind the movie. If you're still in doubt, just think about it like this... Azure seas, sunny skies and plenty of bikini action are just the thing to welcome the summer months. Don't expect much from this movie and you won't be disappointed.

Michael James

# INTO THE WILD

**Director:** Sean Penn  
**Cast:** Emile Hirsch | Marcia Gay Harden,  
 William Hurt | Catherine Keener | Vince  
 Vaughn  
**Genre:** Drama/Adventure  
**Age Restriction:** 13  
**Run Time:** 142 minutes  
**Score:** ★★★★★



**I**MAGINE LEAVING EVERYTHING BEHIND and starting a new life. No PCs, no Internet, no answering to anyone. Just you and nature, you being in charge, you enjoying life to its fullest (John Lennon would've loved this film). *Into the Wild* is inspired by the true story of Christopher McCandless (Emile Hirsch), a young Virginia man who decides to turn his back on and distance himself from his friends, family, and possessions. Upon his graduation from Emory University in Atlanta, Christopher walks away from a loving if dysfunctional family and donates his life savings to Oxfam International – not what his family had in mind for him or his future. Christopher rechristens himself "Alexander Supertramp" and heads west in his beaten-up car. Along the way, his car breaks down. He then hitchhikes his way across America, meeting many interesting characters, and experiences life in the US from a different point of view (just what he wanted). However, Christopher's ultimate goal is to go and live in Alaska, his chosen promised land.

Once in Alaska, however, things turn out not to be what Christopher envisaged, with life tough and nature unpredictable. *Into the Wild* is a thought-provoking film, featuring excellent cinematography and an all-star cast. Watch *Into the Wild* and see life in a different way. We have, and some of us agree: life's become too complicated, too rushed and totally boring. It's time for change.

Nati de Jager

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# 1408

**Director:** Mikael Håfström  
**Cast:** John Cusack | Samuel L. Jackson | Mary McCormack | Tony Shalhoub  
**Genre:** Thriller/Horror  
**Age Restriction:** 13 (LV)  
**Run Time:** 107 minutes  
**Score:** ★★★

**THIS MOVIE TAKES PLACE** almost entirely in a single room and as Samuel L. Jackson's character puts it, "The room is [expletive deleted] evil". Mike Enslin (played by John Cusack) is an author of horror novels. He's never seen any unexplained phenomena, so he's becoming very sceptical towards the existence of the supernatural. That is, until he spends a night in room 1408 of the Dolphin Hotel. Based on a short story by Stephen

King, this film takes the *Silent Hill* approach to terrifying viewers. More often than not, it's what you don't see in the film that terrifies you the most, rather than what you do see. Very few cheap, scare tactics are used and while you're not likely to jump in your seat very often while watching this film, you will be in a constant state of apprehensive fear. You're never sure what's going to happen next, but you know that whatever it is, it's not going to be cute and cuddly. The film is far from perfect and the story never explains itself very well, but this is an enjoyable flick, recommended for anyone who enjoys psychological thrillers. Special features: a couple of alternate endings and two short features ("Inside the Room" and "According to John Cusack") are on offer.

Dane Remendes



# MAD MONEY

**Director:** Callie Khouri  
**Cast:** Diane Keaton | Queen Latifah | Katie Holmes | Ted Danson | Stephen Root | Christopher McDonald | Adam Rothenberg | Roger Cross  
**Genre:** Comedy  
**Age Restriction:** PG (L)  
**Run Time:** 104 minutes  
**Score:** ★★

**NOT QUITE A CHICK-FLICK**, *Mad Money* is more of a crime-caper with women running the operation. Having access to a whole lot of cash that is destined to be destroyed can do strange things to a person. Since the money is "worn out" and sure to be recycled (and is therefore untraceable), why not take a little off the side? That's the premise behind the film (which is apparently based on true events), following three women who work at the Federal Reserve Bank on their quest to get rich quick. It's not a terrible film, it just feels... boring. The plot plays out



back-to-front, starting at the end of the story then jumping back to an earlier point to explain how the conclusion was reached. There aren't many surprises along the way and the story is very predictable, but there are some laughs to be had during the course of the movie. High production values, passable acting and the occasional giggle



the film may force out of you are not enough to warrant a purchase. I can't really recommend the film, since I didn't find it very memorable, but I'm sure someone, somewhere out there will enjoy it. Not much in the way of special features here, just a few trailers.

Dane Remendes

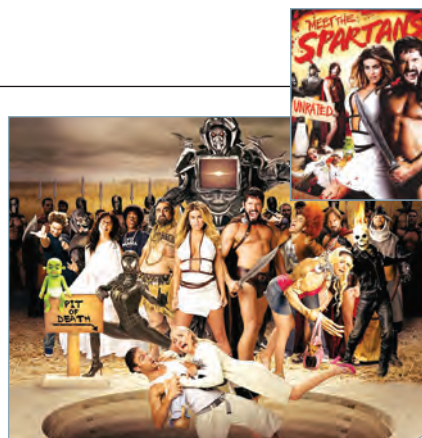
# MEET THE SPARTANS

**Director:** Jason Friedberg & Aaron Seltzer  
**Cast:** Sean Maguire, Carmen Electra, Ken Davitian, Kevin Sorbo  
**Genre:** Parody  
**Age Restriction:** 13 (L)  
**Run Time:** 83 minutes  
**Score:** ★

**THIS ONE FELT LIKE** an eternity – although it was just under an hour and a half long, it felt like three hours that I will never get back! Parody movies are generally bad enough, but having one of the "inspirations" be a low-grade comedy to begin with is simply too much. Primarily, this 'masterpiece' rips off *300*, with the secondary target being *Meet the Parents*. Its plot follows that of *300* quite closely, actually, with the to-be-expected pop-culture references and random, grotesque 'humour'. If you are lactose intolerant, be warned: this is heavy cheese on a slapstick! The humour is almost exclusively base and very simplistic, thus effectively lame, though there are a couple of genuinely good moments. These, however, are not



sufficient to earn this movie its lone single star – that dubious honour goes to Carmen Electra, who is cutting an ever-more-impressive figure. However, what does it mean for her career that she keeps appearing in these flicks? Honestly, were I to be cast in such a film, and had no choice but to accept, for whatever reason, I would insist on wearing dark glasses and a fake moustache, and have my name changed for the credits!



Oh, incidentally, early skirmishes between the faux Spartans and Persians take the form of dance-offs and exchanges of "yo' mamma" insults – feeble! The wealth of "special features" feels like the makers are compensating for something – and quite likely, they are! One highly unusual component is a trivia game using the DVD's menu interface.

Alex Jelagin



# RAMBO

**Director:** Sylvester Stallone

**Cast:** Sylvester Stallone | Julie Benz | Paul Schulze | Mathew Marsden

**Genre:** Action

**Age Restriction:** 16 (LV)

**Run Time:** 91 minutes

**Score:** ★★★★★

**WHEN RAMBO: FIRST BLOOD** hit the screens way back in 1982, few realised the legacy it would create. Now, 26 years and a bucket load of technology developments later, Rambo is back, and he's pissed. Written and directed by Sly himself, *Rambo IV* (or just *Rambo* as it's known), follows the story of ex-military man John Rambo and the new, supposedly peaceful life he's created for himself near the Burmese border in Thailand. When a group of Christian missionaries shows up and asks for a trip into Burma, however, peace is soon the last thing on his mind.

The story itself is hardly mind-blowing, but the setting in which it finds itself certainly is. Stallone's portrayal of the civil war in Burma, which is bluntly referred to as genocide, is true, gritty and violent – really violent, but according to the producers has actually been toned down quite a bit to allow the film into mainstream cinema. All the action throughout the movie feels alive; the camerawork, audio and bevy of visual effects come together to produce some of the most visceral, intense combat scenes I've seen for years.



Along for the ride is a slew of both entertaining and educating special features. The DVD comes filled to the brim with extras ranging from interviews with the production team, including tons of words from Sly, to discussions on the audio and weaponry used in the film as well as a deep-reaching mini documentary on the real Burmese crisis. Definitely one to own if you've got a decent home cinema setup – you won't be disappointed.

**Geoff Burrows**

# NOISE

**Director:** Henry Bean

**Cast:** Tim Robbins | Bridget Moynahan | William Hurt | Margarita Levieva | Gabrielle Brennan | Maria Ballesteros | William Baldwin

**Genre:** Drama (Comedy)

**Age Restriction:** 16 (SNLV)

**Run Time:** 88 minutes

**Score:** ★★★★★

**HAVE YOU EVER SAT** at home, school or work, and been irritated by a car alarm going off nearby? David Owens (Tim Robbins) certainly has – and takes it to a whole new level! The first half of the movies, which is narrated in first person, is a retrospective, a flashback, to events leading up to David's current point in life. Repeatedly he is driven to distraction by sirens and other such urban noise in New York, where he lives. He reacts quite violently, and runs afoul of the law. His antipathy to noise becomes obsessive, and starts interfering with his family life. After an attempt at controlling his 'urges', he finally takes matters into his own hands... While it is tempting to tell more about the film, it would be blatant spoiling, and this film is much too good to do it such an injustice – rather watch it for yourself! Tim Robbins, as always, delivers an intense and downright brilliant performance, while the other actors do an adequate or better job. William Hurt



plays a rather evil mayor who is David's main obstacle in his anti-noise crusade. The film is interspersed with extremely funny moments, as well as a general undertone of grim humour – while taken to almost preposterous extremes. What David is experiencing many of us can identify with! Sadly, there is nothing much in the way of extra features, but the film itself is good enough to not lean on gimmicks.

**Alex Jelagin**

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## PAOLO PARENTE'S DUST VOL. 1

**Format:** Comic Series  
**Publisher:** Image  
**Writer:** Morrison/Parente  
**Artist:** Various  
**Price:** R94.95



**DUST IS SET IN** an alternate WWII/sci-fi universe, in which the Allies fight against the evil Axis forces, bent on world domination. Using futuristic robotic weaponry, the heroes encounter strange biological experiments involving super-strong ape and zombie soldiers, and evil schemes to conquer the free world. Paolo Parente's *Dust* is probably one of the most exquisitely detailed and beautifully illustrated books that I've seen in a long time. Although the story is fairly short, it is action packed, and comes with enough background information. Parente not only pays intricate attention to the art itself, but the planning of the weapons and vehicle designs is thoroughly comprehensive, and the story and setting are so wonderfully thought out that you will be longing for more once you've turned the last page.

Clive Burmeister



## GHOST RIDER ANNUAL #2

**Format:** Comic Series  
**Publisher:** Marvel  
**Writer:** Various  
**Artist:** Various  
**Price:** R37.50



**THIS YEAR'S GHOST RIDER Annual**, titled *Mercy*, features a main story that ties into the current series and leads to the next issue in the monthly *Ghost Rider* comic, #26, as well as a bonus classic story, reprinted in this issue. In the first story, "A Town Called Mercy," Johnny Blaze travels to a small town where it is rumoured that there have been sightings of angels. Johnny, having found out that the curse that ruined his life is actually linked to the renegade angel Zadkiel, follows this lead in the hope of bringing him one step closer to tracking down the angel. However, things are never what they seem: Johnny discovers the reason behind the multitude of apparent suicides in the town. The story is well written and beautifully illustrated by artist Mark Robinson. This is actually Robinson's comic debut, and judging by the energy and intensity of his work, I expect to find him illustrating in some pretty high-profile titles in the future.

Clive Burmeister



## STAR WARS: THE FORCE UNLEASHED

**Format:** Graphic Novel  
**Publisher:** Dark Horse Comics  
**Writer:** Haden Blackman  
**Artists:** Brian Ching | Bong Dazo | Wayne Nichols  
**Price:** R135



**HADEN BLACKMAN, WRITER OF** a many *Star Wars* comics, books and a few games, shows off his literary prowess in the comic-book adaption of the identically-named videogame. The book parallels the game's story almost word for word, dipping in and out of the narrative on occasion to bring meaning to Lucas's multimedia approach to *The Force Unleashed*. Unfortunately, the story suffers a little from being somewhat rushed: hour-long scenes from the game are skipped through in a single frame in an attempt to focus on character interaction, but fail to do the action sequences any justice – the book would benefit from more pages.

While the writing is solid and acceptable, the artwork is truly awesome. Pencil, ink and colour work together to create pages filled with mood and movement. Lines vary from crisp and delicate to bold and forceful, always providing the right amount of black in each frame, and the colouring is smooth and from a carefully coordinated palette. This is definitely one for *Star Wars* fans or those just looking to expand their comic-book collection with an all-rounder.

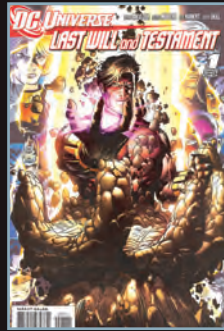
Geoff Burrows





## DC UNIVERSE: LAST WILL & TESTAMENT #1

**Format:** Comic One Shot  
**Publisher:** DC  
**Writer:** Meltzer/Kubert  
**Artist:** Dell/Kubert  
**Price:** R36.50



**IN THE LIGHT OF** the Final Crisis (see the *Final Crisis* miniseries and tie-ins), which is wreaking havoc and panic across the DC Universe, *Last Will & Testament* shows how some of the world's mightiest heroes face what some believe may be their final night. Even the ever-optimistic Clark Kent thinks the world is coming to an end, which has everyone spooked. Well, not everyone. Brion Markov only has one thing on his mind: revenge. Deathstroke killed his sister, destroyed his life, and now, he believes he's ready to make him pay for his crimes. Brion is concerned that his desire to kill Deathstroke would be murder, which would make him more villain than hero, and his friends are equally worried about his attitude, not to mention his chances of going up against Deathstroke - but Brion hardly cares. If it's Judgement Day like Clark believes, he wants to make the evil stand accountable for their crimes.

**Clive Burmeister**



## THE PUNISHER #61

**Format:** Comic Series  
**Publisher:** Marvel MAX  
**Writer:** Gregg Hurwitz  
**Artist:** Laurence Campbell  
**Price:** R27.95



**THE MAX WING OF** Marvel comics, known for its explicit language and graphic violence, is still going strong with its foremost title, *The Punisher*. In issue #61, Frank Castle finds that he has been noticed for his vigilante attacks against America's criminals, which has led to others seeking his help. Torn between the philosophy that his mission against crime is personal, and that he is a soldier in this war, Castle must decide whether to help the powerless who call for his aid against a faceless army that butcher the town's women, even though to Castle, this makes him feel more like a gun-for-hire than a soldier. But can these atrocities go unpunished?

**Clive Burmeister**



## WATCHMEN

**Format:** Graphic Novel  
**Publisher:** DC Comics  
**Writer:** Alan Moore  
**Artists:** Dave Gibbons  
**Price:** R190



**IT'S DIFFICULT TO REVIEW** *Watchmen* without resorting to "Just go out and buy it right now," but keep those words in mind at all times while reading this. *Watchmen* is the product of the legendary Andy Moore's writing and Dave Gibbons' artwork. Both are veterans in their fields and responsible for titles such as *V for Vendetta*, *From Hell*, *2000AD* and *Green Lantern*. Originally published in 1986, the book follows the story of a group of superheroes in an alternate history (then contemporary) as they attempt to uncover the mystery behind a series of deaths among their own ranks, all while exploring the sordid history (and sometimes future) that brought the unlikely group together.

Moore's detailed story is a masterpiece: his writing is evocative of pain and loss, bringing the reader directly in line with the mixed feelings of sorrow and hope throughout the book. Gibbons' drawing is an extension of the writing, enhancing every frame with emotion and passion while still staying true to traditional '80s comic-book styles and palettes. If you're still not sure if you need to own this book, let me make it simple for you: just go out and buy it right now.

**Geoff Burrows**





## STAR WARS: CHEWBACCA BACK BUDDY

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## NARUTO VOLUME 01-27 BOX SET

RRP: R1,170

Supplier: [www.awx.co.za](http://www.awx.co.za)

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# POWER GRID

**I AM COMING TO THE** conclusion that the Germans really know how to make a board game! The box is quite unprepossessing, not much to look at, so my expectations were not very high. Upon opening it, I found that the rulebook was cheerfully thin, consisting of a few pages. However, although the English contained therein is quite precise and grammatically correct, there is definitely something lost in translation, so it can be a bit confusing to get through. However, it is well worth it. Though the rules are a bit of a slog, once you get the hang of them, they are actually pretty simple, and the game flows along very nicely indeed.

The average game takes approximately two hours to play, though that may vary according to how many people are playing. However, and fortunately, game time is not directly proportional to the number of players, as larger games consist of fewer turns. The game mechanics are also tweaked for varying numbers of players,

but while at first these amendments may seem daunting, once the rules are grasped, it's just a matter of turning to the last page and making the appropriate adjustments.

The basic idea is to be the most successful electricity provider for a country (the game board is two-sided, with Germany on one side and USA on the other). I think it is obligatory to make a quip at this point about how relieved we were that we did not experience load-shedding while we played! The game is divided into three steps, which are (more or less) made up of an indeterminate number of turns, each of which consists of five phases. Within a given turn, players first bid for power plants, then buy fuel resources to run their plants, then expand their networks, and finally spend fuels to generate electricity, being paid proportionately to the number of cities they are supplying. Managing the resources, including what plants to buy and what resources to use, can be trickier than

it sounds. The resource (fuel) market is a fairly dynamic one that responds to supply and demand, so wise planning is required, lest you end up with high running costs, or depending on a resource that has been depleted.

The three game steps determine the scale of things, and represent the country's development-level increasing. Resource production gradually increases, as does demand for electricity, opening up new markets. Throughout the game, no information is hidden, except for what is coming next from the power-plant draw stack, so all the information is visible, yet decisions can be challenging, as they will often depend on other players' choices. While the mechanics of the game would be quite difficult to explain in detail, they are quite intuitive once grasped. Suffice it to say, this is an outstanding game that we intend to play for some time to come!

**NAG**  
Alex Jelagin



**Bottom Line**

One of the finest, most subtle board games I have ever seen, with amazing depth and possibilities.





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| Material    | Aluminum + Steel mesh + SECC                          |
| Drive bays  | 5.25" x 4, 3.5" x 1 (External)<br>3.5" x 6 (Internal) |
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| Fans        | 12cm silent x 2                                       |

## 1020

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|-------------|---|
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| Colors      | Silver / Metallic gray / Black                        |
| Side panel  | Intel CAG 1.1 fan duct                                |
| Material    | Aluminum + SECC                                       |
| Drive bays  | 5.25" x 4, 3.5" x 1 (External)<br>3.5" x 5 (Internal) |
| Form factor | ATX / Micro ATX                                       |
| I/O ports   | USB x 2, 1394 x 1, HD+AC'97 x 1                       |
| Fans        | 12cm silent x 2                                       |

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